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PIN MONEY.

CHAPTER I.

When a couple are to be married, if their goods and chattels can be brought to unite, their sympathetic souls are ever ready to guarantee the treaty. The gentleman's mortgaged lawn becomes enamoured of the lady's marriageable grove; the match is struck up, and both parties are plausibly in love—according to act of Parliament.—GOLDSMITH.

"A most unexceptionable proposal, my dear sister!" said Lady Olivia Tadcaster to Lady Launceston, in the secrecy of her dressing-room. "Frederica is a lucky girl; and I recommend her to accept Sir Brooke Rawleigh with as little fuss or delay as possible. Let me see! We are in the first week of June. Maradan, Kitching, and the Irish solicitors will manage to keep the matter drawling on for eight or ten weeks; and I shall not get off to Carlsbad before the end of August, unless my niece can make up her mind without further difficulty."

"You are always in such a hurry, Olivia! Sir Brooke only made his proposal last night, while we were waiting for the carriage to draw up. And as I had no notion of what was going on, I kept begging Frederica to tie her boa closer, and keep her mouth shut, for fear of the east wind;—so that a definitive answer was out of the question."

"Well! and as soon as she reached home and informed you of what had passed, you wrote to Sir Brooke for an explanation of his intentions,—eh! my dear?"

"No, indeed; I am not so fond of business and explanations as you are."

"But you desired Frederica to take up her pen and ——"

"On the contrary, I begged she would take some arrowroot, and go to bed. Well,—please God! I hope she will be happy. Frederica is a very amiable creature—an excellent disposition; only I never can prevail upon her to take proper care of herself."

"And Sir Brooke Rawleigh has a very pretty little estate in

Warwickshire, of which I understand he takes *very* good care. It is just the sort of property a man likes to come into. He succeeds two old bachelor uncles, who never allowed an axe or a surveyor to come within reach of the premises. Old Sir Brooke considered the family timber as inviolable as the family diamonds."

"The young man is *very* well spoken of. His aunt, Mrs. Martha Derenzy, was saying the other day that there is not a finer young man in town;—so steady, and *so* unlike the idle dashers of the day! He will spend a quiet evening playing dummy whist with her, and then go home, with his umbrella, in the rain, with as much good-nature as if he had been doing the thing he liked best in the world."

"Umph!—rather creep-mousy for a young man of eight-and-twenty. I would sooner hear of him in the House, or making himself useful in his county. However, Frederica is not without spirit; and I trust she will inspire him with a little more energy, or I shall disown her as my godchild. But now, my dear, about settlements. I conclude your errand with me is to consult about your terms with Sir Brooke?"

"Terms? Surely I told you before, that Frederica acknowledges having always felt a preference for Rawleigh over the rest of her admirers; and that I entertain no doubt she will accept him at once."

"Yes, yes! I understand. She will ask 'time to become better acquainted with him';—eat half-a-dozen dinners in his company;—spoil a row or two of netting while he sits whispering nonsense and pulling her workbox to pieces;—and finally, vouchsafe to give that consent at the end of a fortnight, which she might bestow with quite as good a grace this very day. All those young-lady etiquettes are perfectly understood. But what do you mean to ask for her?"

"Ask for her?" said the mystified Lady Launceston.

"Yes!—what does your man of business think you have a right to expect?"

"Thank heaven I *have* no man of business; for yours, my dear sister, appears to be the plague of your life."

"Well then—youself. What provision shall you require for your daughter?"

"Why, you say Sir Brooke has a *very* pretty estate; so Frederica will be tolerably well off."

"But I am speaking of her *jointure*—her *pin-money*."

"Oh! I suppose Sir Brooke's lawyers will settle all that, while carriage is building and the wedding clothes are in hand."

"*Sir Brooke's lawyers!*" cried Lady Olivia, raising her eyes and hands in contemptuous compassion of her sister's ignorance of the world;—or at least of such of its legal and financial departments as formed the delight of her own existence. "My dear Sophia! upon an occasion like this, you really *must* exert yourself. Recollect you are the sole guardian of your daughter's interests. She has ten thousand pounds, which may prove extremely convenient to pay off mortgages; besides very fair expectations. Altogether, you have a right to look for liberal overtures."

"Well, I *will* look for them, since you insist upon it," said Lady Launceston, gathering up her shawl for departure, and smiling at the solemn earnestness of her sister. "You know I have no head for business. Launceston always used to settle everything of that kind; and the utmost extent of my domestic management is limited to stretching my jointure so as just to cover our expenses; which, thank God, I have always been enabled to do."

"That is exactly the point to which I wished to bring you. What would you have done with your expenses, if *your* father and mother had thought and talked with as much levity on the subject of settlements as you do?"

"Oh! I suppose Lord Launceston made the necessary arrangements for me. I recollect we all signed something on a sheet of parchment the day before my marriage; but Gray was waiting in the other room with my jewel-box, which occupied my attention more agreeably. Then, when I lost my poor husband, I was in too much affliction to inquire about settlements;—my son was very considerate in letting me know that I was to have two thousand a-year, and Frederica ten thousand pounds—an arrangement which, I conclude, was made in the will. Poor dear Launceston could not endure to see a woman worldly-wise. He never suffered me to talk to him about his pecuniary concerns; and used to say that a managing woman deserved to wear a beard by way of penance."

"Ah!—I have not forgotten his polite animadversions upon my chancery-suit with my father's executors. I know he hated to see me under his roof, because he saw I was not a person to be hoodwinked, like some of my family. But even Lord Launceston, with his arbitrary notions of female delicacy and feminine nonentity, would not have wished to see his daughter defrauded of her just pretensions."

"I tell you what we will do," said Lady L., penetrated with a bright thought of escaping all the vexatious arithmetical combinations she saw impending over her. "Come back with me to Charles-street, and talk the matter over with Frederica. You have a much better head for this sort of thing than I have. Do

now—there's a good creature! It was sprinkling when I came in. But the pavement must be dry by this time, and with your clogs and a good warm shawl—or shall I send back the chair for you?"

"With the thermometer at 68 degrees, I have very little apprehension of catching cold! But I expect a man with silks from Harding's, at once;—at half-past, Mawe's people are coming to clean my alabaster vases;—at two, Ridgway's clerk will be here, to see how many of the pamphlets I keep;—and from that time till three, I have appointments with my Worcestershire agent, Professor Muddlewell, about the mining business in Flintshire,—General Popplestone, to whom I wish to refer for Frederick's commission,—Lady Ulster, about getting young Shakes into the Academy of Music;—besides two notes, which I must positively answer, relative to a negotiation for an introduction between Lady Barbara Dynley and the Duke of D——; she is dying to get to his parties."

"And *you*, I should imagine, my dear Olivia, of your labours!—Goodness! how *will* you get through all these perplexities?"

"You shall judge, if you please; for at four I have ordered the carriage to go to Knight's, at Chelsea, with a beautiful new annual I have just received from my nephew, Tadcaster, whom I fitted out last year for Swan River."

"I thought Knight, the bookseller, lived in Pall Mall?"

"And at five," resumed Lady Olivia, who seldom troubled herself to enlighten the crepuscular mind of her sister, "I will look in at Charles-street, and hear what arrangements have been talked of between Sir Brooke and Frederica."

At five, accordingly, Lady Olivia Tadcaster drove to the door; and during the ten minutes devoted on the hall-steps by this notable economist of time and space, to directing her footman by what short cuts and obliquities he must contrive to deliver seven cards, two notes, a parcel and a message, to turn to account the lapse of her family consultation,—Miss Rawdon was explaining to her lover the necessity for admitting and conciliating this fussiest of aunts; who would otherwise beset their union with a thousand well-meant impediments. She concluded her preliminary counsels in time to receive Lady Olivia and her congratulations, with just the flushed, fluttering, hysterical tremor of perfect felicity, with which young ladies listen to the assurance that they are angels; and contemplate, for the first time, the career of human happiness and worldly prosperity arising from matronly importance.

In truth, poor Frederica's prospects, though irradiated at the of twenty-one by the auspicious sunshine of "measureless

content," had not been without their clouds' and passing showers. It was now nearly a year since a visit to the county of Warwick introduced Sir Brooke Rawleigh to her notice, as the most charming of mankind; for a man is naturally twice as highly valued in his own county as in any other, or in London. He had passed a gay Christmas with her at her brother's seat at Marston Park;—had taken a daily ride with her—read with her—talked to her—smiled upon her—sighed for her,—done everything, in short, but tender himself and Rawleighford to her acceptance. After his departure, her brother incessantly rallied her upon his attachment; while her female cousins expressed their indignation at his desertion, in terms which frequently brought tears into Frederica's hazel eyes;—for, alas! it was known that Sir Brooke had quitted Marston only to venture upon a visit to a certain Lady Mapleberry—an active-spirited woman of her aunt Tadcaster's class, with six unmarried daughters;—one of those large, lively, good-humoured, singing, dancing, riding, chatting families, where a young man seeking a wife is apt to fall in love with the joint-stock merit and animation of the group; and to feel quite astonished on discovering, after his union with Harriet or Jane, how moderate a proportion he has received in his lawful sixth of the music, information, accomplishments, and good-humoured gossipry of the united tribe. Much to the astonishment, however, of the Jane, Harriet, Eliza, Margaret, Laura, and Anna, in question, Sir Brooke Rawleigh quitted Mapleberry quite as free in hand, and far more free in fancy, than he had found himself when his britschka glided through the lodge gates of Marston Park.

From the meeting of parliament in the ensuing spring, till the auspicious second Wednesday of the month of June,—poor Miss Rawdon was destined to undergo all the little fretful irritations of love and suspense. Sir Brooke, in defiance of her daily rides with her brother in Hyde-park, had mounted a new phaeton, and was never to be seen without the reins in his hand; and had appropriated to himself a stall at the Opera, from which, by no process of vertebral dislocation, could he catch a glimpse of Lady Launceston's box. And after seeing him dance two succeeding quadrilles with Laura Mapleberry, Miss Rawdon underwent the martyrdom of a nervous headache. But at length, after taking oceans of camphor-julep, she took courage. Instead of following her irresolute admirer in his flirtations with burning eyes and a beating heart, she began to turn the former with some show of graciousness upon her brother's friend, Colonel Rhyse, of the Guards; and subdued the perturbation of the latter, till she could manufacture a smile for Sir Robert Morse and Lord Putney, two of her partners.

The charm was eminently successful. Sir Brooke grew agitated in his turn. For a whole evening, Laura Mapleberry sat unnoticed; and by the end of a week, Frederica's headaches were convalescent,—for her hand was pledged to the man of her heart. Though an amiable, engaging, accomplished girl, Miss Rawdon had no preternatural pretensions to perfection. She was but a woman; and when warmly solicited by Sir Brooke for a promise that in accepting his proposals she would attempt at some future time to return his affection, did not think it necessary to magnify his triumph and deprecate herself and her sex, by a confession of having forestalled it by her own preference. Not a word did she communicate touching her nervous indisposition and the camphor-julep.

They were just pausing at this degree of tender confidence, and Lady Launceston was smiling her maternal satisfaction with no greater motive of inquietude for either than their position between the draughts of a closed window and a listed door, when Lady Olivia Tadcaster flustered her way into the drawing-room, with her lustering pelisse rustling at every step, like a plantation of aspens. She soon despatched her satisfaction in "welcoming into her family the nephew of her estimable friends, the late Sir Brooke and Sir Robert Rawleigh;" glanced at "a valuable stratum of blue clay she had discovered on occasion of a visit to Rawleighford, twenty years before,—and which, as she could not prevail upon her host to regard it with sufficient attention, she would have willingly farmed upon her own account, more especially as there had been a talk at that time of carrying the Wardingsley canal within a stone's throw of the estate;"—grumbled over an extra turnpike she had discovered at Earl's-court in her morning's drive;—explained the mode of cultivation to be bestowed upon some New Zealand spinach of which a plant would cover three quarters of an acre,—and of which Sir Brooke very judiciously begged an ounce, in order that he might reassure the horticultural misgivings of his future aunt, by making the experiment at Rawleighford;—and finally anchored herself upon the history of an arabesque handle, which Mawe's people had broken from her Aldobrandini vase. When she had proceeded as far in this episode as her purchase of the alabaster vessel at Florence, and its embarkation on board an English trading-vessel at Leghorn, Sir Brooke uttered a profound sigh, made a profound bow, muttered something about "business" in Lincoln's Inn, and took refuge in his phaeton; while Frederica bestowed a glance as nearly resembling an angry look as she was capable of assuming, on the aunt who not only detained her from the furtive delight of peeping behind the damask draperies at Raw-

leigh's noble charrteership, but actually followed up his exit with an exclamation of—

" Well! I am glad he is gone at last. Now, we can be a little comfortable.—Frederica, my dear, I have a thousand things to say to you."

" Pray do not say them just now, if they require a thousand answers; for I have at least a thousand other things to think of."

" As you please," replied Lady Olivia, looking very much affronted; more particularly as she remembered her footman's multitudinous errands, and that—even making allowance for the short cuts—she could not possibly command the use of her carriage for the next half hour. " I trust I am not in the habit of intruding my advice. But I came here by my sister's desire to talk with you."

" My dearest aunt! Did you but know how much I have been talked to for the last three hours!"

" I conclude so, my dear.—I conclude so," cried Lady Olivia, unable to preserve her ill-humour, when the prospect of a little business to be managed presented itself to her hopes. " And now tell me all about it. Has Sir Brooke behaved handsomely?—What does he offer?"

" His hand and heart,—or you would not see me so happy!" replied Miss Rawdon, rising and seating herself nearer to her mother, as the thought that she must shortly leave her glanced across her mind, and produced a momentary emotion.

" My dear Fred.," said Lady Launceston, " do not hang over that Gardenia. You will get another of your nervous headaches."

Frederica obeyed with a smile. For she began to suspect that her disorder was radically cured; or that perhaps it might have found its way to Laura Mapleberry.

" And your settlements, child?" inquired Lady Olivia, despising them both with an air of stern disdain, worthy of Catherine of Russia.

" Sir Brooke appears to dislike business as much as I do," said Lady Launceston, rolling the long silky ear of her lapdog round her knitting-pin. " He said he begged to offer me *carte blanche*; which I suppose means that the lawyers will settle it amongst themselves."

" Did he—did Rawleigh offer you *carte blanche?*" exclaimed Lady Olivia, jerking together the clasp of her bag, in which she was searching for a memorandum or an old letter, which might prove more amusing than the yea-nay conversation of her sister and niece. " Well, my dear Sophia, under such circumstances, you must decide every thing without delay. With Fred.'s ten thousand pounds, I should certainly demand three thousand a-year, jointure; and five hundred, pin money."

"Ask for a jointure? Make a bargain with the prospect of Rawleigh's death?" exclaimed Miss Rawdon, with indignation.

"Pray, my dear niece, do not affect to be so much more delicate and fastidious than the rest of the world. All women who marry in a respectable way, have a respectable jointure and pin money settled upon them; or they might at some future time become a burden to their relations."

"No! not *all* women," said Lady Launceston, still busy with Chloe's ear—while her daughter had again recourse to the Gardenia to conceal a smile. "I, for one, never had any pin money. Launceston was very liberal, and chose that we should have a common purse."

"It must have been a very *uncommon* one, if it did not give you occasion to repent the bargain. A man who sets out by telling his wife, 'as long as I have a shilling, sixpence of it is yours,' generally takes care never to have *more* than a shilling at his disposal. I have always observed that money paid in small sums appears a tremendous concession, compared with a specific allowance, paid quarterly by the banker or steward."

"Which places one exactly on a level with the butler or the dairymaid!"

"No! Frederica; which places you on a level with women of your own rank in society. Do you suppose the Duchess of Middlesex, or Lady Rosebank, or any other person of fashion of your acquaintance, condescends to go blushing to her husband for a twenty pound note, if she wishes to perform some charitable action—or subscribe to some laudable institution—or pay her shoemaker's bill?"

"But I trust Rawleigh and myself will perform our charities together; and I am not fond of seeing female names figuring in the lists of institutions. I shall leave that portion of our expenses to Sir Brooke."

"And the shoemaker's account?—Shall you go barefoot in the punctiliofulness of your delicacy; or—"

"No," said Frederica, musingly. "I certainly should *not* like to trouble him with my personal expenses. It is unwise on the part of any woman to allow her husband to discover of what shreds and patches her sex is composed."

"Very true, my love," observed Lady Launceston. "For when they *do* trouble themselves with such matters, they so strangely exaggerate all one's little follies, and their own generosity! I recollect Launceston gave me a five hundred pound note when your brother was born; and for two whole years afterwards, whenever I presented him with a bill, or put my hand into his escritoire, he

used to exclaim. ‘What, Sophy?—all that five hundred gone so soon?’ Though, after all, it was only a year’s allowance.”

“Well then, dear mamma,” said Frederica, “make what arrangements for me you think best; only, pray do not let Rawleigh suppose I have mercenary views in my marriage. You have hitherto been so kind as to give me all I could desire, without suffering me to trouble myself with money or its value; and I was in hopes it might have been so still. But I cannot expect any one else to be so considerate of me as my own dear mother.”

Lady Launceston threw her arms round the neck of her child; while Lady Olivia placed herself at the table, and in five minutes left upon the Russia blotting-book half a sheet of hieroglyphics, and an address to Messrs. Marwill and Makewill, New-square, Lincoln’s Inn.

“There, Sophy,” said she to her sister, with a glance of pity at the filial embrace which she styled “poor Frederica’s heroics”—“I have already given you my advice,—I now give you my solicitor’s direction. In pity to my journey to Carlsbad, see him as quickly as you can; and do not give your daughter cause to reproach you hereafter with inactivity in her behalf.”

And so deeply did her ladyship’s counsels sink into the minds of her sister and niece, that within six weeks, as rigid an act of marriage settlement was signed in the drawing-room in Charles-street, as if Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh were about to marry chiefly in contemplation of a divorce; and to swear an eternal unity of mind, body, and estate, chiefly for the maintenance of separate interests and opposing rights.

CHAPTER II.

No, I’ll resign them, sweet, and anchor *here*—
 Here in the holy quietude of home!—
 The world is all contentions—jealousies—
 Strifes urged by interest and foul enmity;
 While on the waves of this calm, lonely stream,
 The halcyon broods unscared.—I’ll anchor *here*!

TOBIN.

SIR BROOKE RAWLEIGH, the willing victim of Lady Olivia Tadcaster’s cupidity, was in truth a very pleasing, well-looking, gentlemanly young man, calculated to pass through life with credit to himself, without splitting the trumpet of fame by the magnitude of his sayings or doings. But all that was wanting in brilliancy of talent was made up by sterling principles of honour and honest-

and his abilities were peculiarly adapted to the judicious management of a tolerably extensive landed estate, and the steady maintenance of those collateral links which unite the proprietor to his county, and his county to the kingdom. His financial discernment might not have shone in Downing-street, or made a plausible figure on the treasury-bench. But it was sufficient to keep Mr. Ruggs, his steward, within reasonable bounds of peculation, and had more than once attracted the sapient reverence of his brethren of the petty sessions. His eloquence would scarcely have suspended the breath of five hundred startled senators, like one of Canning's electrical orations ; or in a seven-hour's process of argument have kept their eyelids unsealed, like a discussion by Brougham. Nevertheless, it made a respectable stand at the after-dinner debates of the squirearchy of his neighbourhood ; and his maiden speech at a county meeting, on the poor-laws, or the corn-laws, or the anti-slavery, or anti-knavery associations, or some of those cut-and-dried themes for full-grown gentlemen, which, like huge stones upon a hill, are rolled upwards and downwards with succeeding vehicles, without a chance of being crushed into the beaten track, had found its way into the County Chronicle, well italicized with "*Hear, hear;*" besides being honoured with ten lines of great-letter eulogy from the pen of the editor.

Sir Brooke Rawleigh, in short, was gifted with just that measure of intellectual power which is either made or marred by education. A preceptor of strong or elegant abilities might have done wonders with him. But his uncle and guardian, Sir Robert, who was something of a humourist, contended that wonders were by no means necessary for a young man whose chief business in life would be the management of his Warwickshire estate. Instead, therefore, of sending him to a public school, to become a classical scholar and universal dunce, and to a crack college to become a fox-hunter and a man of the world, he was educated at Rugby and Edinborough ; passed his vacations at his uncle's country-seat, under the vigilant superintendence of a neighbouring curate ; and on attaining his majority and a very ancient baronetcy, made his first appearance in town with notions rather too narrow for the fashionable clubs. In spite, however, of these demerits, he was soon discovered to be a gentlemanly, good-tempered young man ; and in return for the favourable verdict of society, condescended to sacrifice his old-fashioned tailor and old-fashioned ways. After flirting through half-a-dozen seasons, yachting through as many summers, and dividing the same portion of winters between Paris and Melton, Sir Brooke Rawleigh came to be regarded in the neighbourhood of ~~Rawleighford~~ as a miracle of fashion—a model of manners ; and

when, at eight-and-twenty, an ox was roasted in honour of his union with Frederica Rawdon, the whole county was of opinion, with Lady Olivia Tadcaster, that it was "an unexceptionable match;" and that the new *ménage* would form a very advantageous addition to the neighbourhood at large.

There was only one individual immediately concerned in the alliance, who appeared at all inclined to question the superlative superiority of Sir Brooke, or the eminent luck of Frederica. The anticipations of the reader are completely at fault. It was no person of the name of Mapleberry, no Sir Robert Morse, no Lord Putney; no envious cousin—no officious aunt. It was her brother, Lord Launceston. Gifted with one of those frank and easy dispositions which qualify a man to be called "an off-hand fellow,"—he was so apt to put the whole world in his own confidence, that he could not fail to regard his new brother-in-law as unnaturally reserved and cautious. When he found that Rawleigh had purchased his six years' experience of London and Paris society, at no heavier expense than bad debts to the amount of a few hundreds among his intimate friends,—the purchase of three lame horses,—and a damaged cabriolet,—he pronounced the Warwickshire baronet too prudent by half. He had himself been duped to a larger extent long before he left Eton; and when, on arriving in town for the signature of his sister's settlements, he accidentally learned from Lady Olivia (with whom he had become a great favourite, by resigning into her hands the payment of a mortgage on his estate, and half-a-dozen troublesome annuities), that Rawleigh had rebelled against the article of pin money, and had even succeeded in reducing it from five to four hundred a-year, he began to vote him a shabby dog, and to hope his little Fred. might not live to repent her choice.

"But, my dear Launceston," said his mother, who entertained a high opinion of Sir Brooke, because he travelled in a comfortable, with magnesia lozenges in his dressing-case, and made it a rule never to sit in wet boots,—"I assure you that the diminution was made at Frederica's desire; and that Rawleigh objects to pin money upon principle."

"Half the dirty things in this world are done 'upon principle!' —the word is a universal gag, to prevent people from exclaiming against meanness. I, for instance, am going to give up the Marston hounds this winter, because I find them too heavy a pull; and I mean to do it 'upon principle.'"

"And what principle can you possibly put forward, without unhandsomely compromising the memory of your father, by whom they were established?"

"Why, you see, it is my intention to marry next season—"
"Indeed!"

"*Must*, my dear mother,—no other resource! Involved beyond all redemption, but an heiress. So I intend to feel persuaded (upon principle) that it would not suit the future Lady Launceston to have the bachelor's wing at Marston Park filled with riotous fellows, from October till March; or to begin her matrimonial reign by evacuating the territory, and dislodging her husband's chosen associates;—and thus, 'upon principle,' my hunting establishment is already on its road to Tattersall's; and I shall clear off an item of five thousand from my annual expenses, and save my principle and my principal at one and the same time."

"I rejoice to hear it,—I detest fox-hunting in all its branches," replied Lady Launceston, whose mind was anything but inferential; "those horrible hounds were the bane of my wedded happiness. I shall never forget poor dear Lord Launceston's attack of pleurisy after riding home twenty miles at a foot's pace, with a broken collar-bone, in a mizzling rain! I am very glad you have got rid of them, my dear William, principle or no principle; and I sincerely hope you may make as prudent a matrimonial choice next season as Frederica."

"I dare say I shall marry some poor curate's daughter,—or a popular actress,—or Lady Mapleberry's governess. For I have made up my mind to an heiress, and never executed a plan of my own in my life."

"I wish you would execute one of mine and your father's, and marry your cousin, Lady Mary Trevelyan, who has a clear ten thousand a-year."

"And twenty thousand French fopperies, and Irish vulgarisms, to balance her rent-roll. No! mother. I shall come to town early in the winter, get a card for the city-assembly, and bring you home a daughter from Aldermanbury, with a dowry of a Persian princess, and the dialect of a hackney-coachman."

But in the winter, the inconsistent and fickle Lord Launceston, driven from home by his resignation of the Marston hounds, found himself very comfortably established at Rawleighford; having overcome his prejudice against the prudential qualities of his brother-in-law, on finding him a tolerable judge of a horse, and willing to find his way to cover, provided the hounds met within a moderate distance, and Mr. Ruggs could be persuaded to dispense with his master's society.

A strong proof that Sir Brooke Rawleigh was neither so reserved in heart and hand as had been announced by Lady Olivia, and dreaded by her rattlepate nephew, was his partiality for the society

of Frederica's wild brother ; and his warm hospitality, not only to Lord Launceston, but even to such of his intimate friends as he chose to introduce at Rawleighford. Aware that a long series of extravagance had embarrassed the finances of his brother-in-law, and estranged him from habits of domestic life, Sir Brooke entered with cordial eagerness into the hopes of his mother and sister, that a prudent marriage might alienate him from his boyish follies and expensive companions, and restore to Marston Park its reputation of hereditary respectability.

It was nevertheless true that Rawleigh, during the confection of his marriage settlements, had made many more journeys to Gray's Inn than were good for the wheels of his phaeton, or for his credit with any member of the family, excepting Lady Olivia Tadcaster. Frederica herself, although as indifferent respecting money matters as prosperity and ignorance of the world could render her, was somewhat dissatisfied that her lover should wish to dispense with the provision allotted for the maintenance of her personal expenses ; and without conjecturing that Rawleigh's demur arose from a dread that the management of too large an income might rouse in his bride the latent love of business so offensive in her aunt, or the taste for profusion which had proved so fatal to the interests of her brother, she was tempted to suspect, at the united instigation of these two relatives, that the advice of Mrs. Martha Derenzy and Mr. Ruggs might possibly have infected her beloved Rawleigh with an over-solicitude for the things of this world.

In the unqualified happiness of her wedded life, however, Frederica's apprehensions soon wore away. She saw her husband respected by his tenants, his household, his family connexions. She saw that his establishment was arranged upon a liberal plan, and its hospitalities cordially extended to her brother, mother, and relations. The family diamonds had been reset for her use, a handsome equipage appointed for her service ; and having chanced, during her bridal excursion among the Scottish lakes, to express a fancy for a pony phaeton, she was greeted on her arrival at Rawleighford by the sight of a pair of greys, whose silken tails swept the ground ; and an accompanying garden chair, whose fairy dimensions might have been suggested by the wand of Cinderella's godmother.

Under such circumstances, the very name of pin money was forgotten. Among the wedding presents provided by the kind and thoughtful Lady Launceston for her daughter, was a purse of her own workmanship, containing one hundred bright new sovereigns ; and Frederica, amply supplied in her *trousseau* with every imaginable object of feminine luxury, and uninvited by the habits of

her country life to frivolous expenses, found little occasion to visit this maternal treasury; except from occasional motives of benevolence towards persons whose equivocal reputation excluded their unequivocal wretchedness from the tender mercies of the Rawleighford kitchen, and the official patronage of Mr. Ruggs.

One morning, however,—one of those weary winter mornings, when Sir Brooke was tempted away by her brother to try a new purchase with the hounds,—Lady Rawleigh having devoted the time of their absence to a visit to a distant neighbour, long owed, and long talked of, chanced to be smitten with all the vehemence of a woman's predilection for a certain white marble fountain, in the form of a water-lily, which graced the centre of Lady Lawford's conservatory. During the solitude of her homeward drive, she could dream of nothing but the enchanting effect a similar fountain would produce in an American garden, which Rawleigh had lately projected for her in a rocky dell of the park, and which was now nearly completed; and some slight recollection of his imputed economical turn disinclining her to propose this luxurious addition to its expenses, she resolved upon the purchase on her own account.

"I will make myself a present out of my *pin money*," mused Frederica. "Lady Lawford assures me that beautiful fountain cost her only seventy guineas; and as I never want money, I cannot employ my allowance better than in the embellishment of Rawleighford." As soon as she arrived at home, the order was eagerly despatched; and Frederica, by way of rendering the affair a pleasing surprise to her husband, was careful never to allude to the flower-garden at Elvington. She entertained not the slightest suspicion that Sir Brooke had already commissioned Lady Olivia to procure him from her agent at Florence, a far more beautiful fountain; with a view to perfect the fairy retreat he had provided for his adored wife.

At length, in despite of the fox-hunters, and of the grumbling of Mr. Ruggs, the warm breath of April came sighing over the lawns of Rawleighford. The verdure and reviving flowers soon gave tokens of its influence; and, on the first promise of returning summer, Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh set forward to take possession of the smoky, dingy, inconvenient house in Bruton-street, which six hundred guineas were to make their own for the season. The prospect of being once more settled near her mother, fortunately closed the ears of Frederica against the discontents of her whole establishment. No sooner had they arrived in town, than away she flew to Charles-street, leaving the housekeeper to despond — the deficiency of blankets, stoves, and store-rooms; and the

butler giving warning to Sir Brooke, that so damp a pantry was incompatible with the interests of his gout and the service of plate.

Lady Rawleigh was already prepared, by a letter from her mother, to find a stranger installed in her establishment;—a young person named Elbany, who had been well recommended to her as companion. For poor Lady Launceston, having no longer Frederica's music to cheer her dowager evenings, Frederica's bright eyes to thread her needles, and Frederica's sore throats to task her maternal anxieties, had begun to fancy herself lonely; and had finally been compelled to have recourse to the *Morning Post* advertisements of “a young lady of genteel connexions, unexpectedly reduced from affluence, &c., &c.” Her daughter, indeed, was too affectionately disposed towards her, to feel anything but satisfaction that she should have been enabled to domesticate under her roof a person so accomplished, so good-humoured, so companionable, and so meritorious, as this Miss Elbany was described to her by Lady Launceston. Still, Frederica could not help feeling that the curtsey dropped to her, and the glance bestowed upon her by “the companion” on quitting the drawing-room, were somewhat more familiar and inquisitorial than she had been prepared to expect from such a personage. The first impression was decidedly unfavourable to the young lady of genteel connexions.

Nor, in the course of her next morning's conversation with Lady Launceston, did her feelings soften towards this paragon of the toad-eating species. Lady Rawleigh had arrived in Charles-street, overflowing with such filial yearnings of heart, as an only daughter might be supposed to feel after a separation of eight months—the first of her life—from her only parent. For in spite of Sir Brooke's invitations, her ladyship of Launceston had been far too apprehensive of damp beds, and inn-infections, to venture as far as Rawleighford. And now, when poor Frederica had so much to say of her new home,—her domestic arrangements,—her brother's reformation,—her pony phæton, her harp, her flower-garden, and the innumerable instances of Rawleigh's kindness,—her narratives were nipped in the bud by the eagerness with which Lady Launceston proceeded to enlarge on the merits of her new companion. Nay! once when Lady Rawleigh was describing to her mother how considerate an assistant she had found at Rawleighford rectory for her charitable labours, and how orthodox and exemplary a curate they possessed in Dr. Fisher, she was cut short by her preoccupied auditress, with “Dr. Fisher?—a medical man? Do you know, my dearest Fred., I could not persuade Miss Elbany to see a medical man last week, all that I could say or do; though

I assure you she had a catarrh which would have made many people look serious. At dessert, she sneezed four or five times running! And yet she would not hear of a basin of gruel when she went to bed."

"And Wrightson's gruel is so excellent," observed Lady Rawleigh,—angry with herself for being angry with her mother's foible. "However, my dear mamma, you will not require so much of Miss Elbany's attention now I am come back. I shall be constantly here of an evening, and you must let me prepare your work, and read to you, as I formerly did. And our dear happy old times will come over again,—only that we shall now have a cheerful addition to the family circle."

"Ah! my dear Fred., you show your usual discrimination! Miss Elbany will, *indeed*, be a cheerful addition to our family circle. But do not talk of the good old times coming over again; those days, child, are past for both of us. When a woman marries, it is written that she shall leave father and mother, and cleave to her husband; and when I went up to sit and cry in your dressing-room, my dear Frederica, on your wedding-day, I felt that you were lost to me,—that you never would or could be with me again as in times past."

There were many things in this speech which grated on the ear of Lady Rawleigh. In the first place, her "cheerful addition" had referred to her husband; and having at present no family of her own to estrange her affections and divert them into a new channel, she thought her mother a little premature in announcing their alienation. But she came there to be kind and happy; and was determined not to indulge her petulance at the risk of vexing Lady Launceston.

Again, she plunged into the history of her country neighbourhood; her presidency over a ball at the county town; her plans of London gaiety; her ensuing presentation; her first appearance as a bride, and all those numerous feminine trivialities, which had formerly excited the coincident interests of mother and daughter. But although Lady Rawleigh received with great indulgence and sympathy the interruption of Lady Launceston in announcing the distribution of Chloe's recent nursery of puppies, she was again moved almost to an irritable feeling, when her mother startled her in the midst of a description of the chintz drawing-room opening into the conservatory at Rawleighford, with "You cannot imagine, Fred., how Miss Elbany has improved the appearance of *your* old room, by moving the bed nearer to my dressing-room door, and placing the wardrobe next the window. It looks quite a different place; so much more light and cheerful. But then, she always has things

in such order ! You will find her, my dear, a very superior young woman."

Frederica took leave as speedily and affectionately as she could. But there was something in all this she did not like. It appeared to her that, had her mother quitted for ever an habitual chamber in *her* house, she would have retained every object sacredly in its original position ; nor permitted a stranger, *an hireling*, to pollute it by her habitation. She recollects how Lady Launceston used to creep into that room at night when *she* had retired to rest indisposed ; how often she had woken and found her mother sitting watching by her bedside ; and she could not bear to think of "the companion" living in the same close and affectionate vicinage to Lady Launceston's apartment.

She arrived in Bruton-street, and dressed for dinner, in any thing but charity with Miss Elbany and her multifarious virtues.

CHAPTER III.

Petit monstre divin, lutin indéchiffrable,
Qu'il faudroit étouffer—si elle n'était adorable.

LA COQUETTE CORRIGEE.

HAD it not been for the warmth of filial duty and affection which recalled her to her mother's neighbourhood, Frederica would have been well contented to pass the first spring of her married life at Rawleighford. At a distance from the pomps and vanities of London life, her contempt for the mere frippery of society had been extremely philosophical.

But after a morning's round of busy idleness, she began to experience a reviving interest in the minutiae of female existence. She felt that the finery of her *trousseau*, which had worn the newest gloss of novelty in Warwickshire, was obsolete in town ; that her waist was too short, her dress too long, to appear with credit in a London ball-room ; and by the time she had paid her subscription at Mitchell's, purchased a few new canezous at Dévy's, replenished her dressing-box at Hendrie's, and her writing-box at Houghton's, she found herself in that elation of spirits which a first morning passed in the metropolis is apt to infuse into a person whose head is bossed with the organ of acquisitiveness, and whose pocket garnished with a well-filled purse. Her last errand was a morning visit to her friend Mrs. William Erskyne, whose career of fashionable girlhood had been contemporary with her own, and to whom she had officiated as bridesmaid a few months previously to h-

own marriage. Louisa Erskyne was a popular little woman, with no greater sin upon her shoulders than a very empty head with a very pretty face; keeping her husband and father in perpetual consternation by her inconsiderate levities, but remaining a prodigious favourite with the world in general.

"My dearest—dearest Frederica!" exclaimed Mrs. Erskyne, throwing her arms round Lady Rawleigh, "how happy I am to have you here again. How do you like my new house and all my belongings? For my part I am growing disgusted with them! Ever since I paid a visit to Lady Axeter, in Belgrave-square, I have detested the sight of [this old family mansion, with its square staircase and narrow doorways; and I intend that Erskyne shall neither eat, drink, nor sleep—or, what he cares for more, neither hunt nor shoot, till he has settled me in the Belgrave *quartier*, and let this ponderous old relic of the middle ages to some city knight. It would be the very house for a popular dentist."

"It is well for you that Lady Drusilla Erskyne cannot rise from her grave and hear you utter such treason!"

"And now, tell me a little about Warwickshire. Are the people tolerably humanized? How glad I am that Erskyne is not afflicted with a family seat! I should so abhor the sight of the avenue, the sound of the dinner-bell, and the rooks, and the still more atrocious cawing of the country neighbours!"

"But we have neither avenue nor rooks at Rawleighford; and our neighbourhood is considered remarkably good."

"Spare me the definition of what is called a remarkably good neighbourhood; I know it by heart. A fat D.D. rector, with two exemplary daughters in green veils—a Sir Marmaduke and Lady Domesday, with their park paling white with age, like their own wigs, and covered with lichen like their own chins—a new Lord Furbish, whose plantations are too young to furnish a birch broom, and whose service of plate is deeply pitted with the recent impressions of Goldsmith's Hall; a——"

"No, no, no!" cried Frederica, laughing. "Wrong from beginning to end!—Sir Brooke, the only baronet in the neighbourhood, dates from the Restoration. Our neighbour, the Lord Lieutenant, is of Norman extraction, and derives his coronet from the field of Cressy. While our rector is a fashionable dean, his lordship's youngest brother!"—

"Well, well!—I may have exaggerated the sins of your neighbourhood, but I have ocular demonstration, my dear, of your own. Are you not ashamed to show yourself in that quizzical pelisse?—Fringed too!—my maid has thrown away hers these three months.

'o not think I shall allow you, Fred., to pass another winter in

Warwickshire, to get tanned, and shapeless, and unfashioned in this way. While you have been leading the life of a cauliflower, I have had such a delightful season at Brighton! A succession of dinner-parties and balls—quite an echo of London. Do you know I have not passed a *tête-à-tête* evening with Erskyne, half a dozen times since we married. After all, there is nothing so *very* tremendous in the dulness of domestic life."

"We prefer the seclusion of the country. I came up to town chiefly to see my mother."

"Yes, yes! People generally have a convenient dowager mother, or grandfather, whom they fly to town to visit, when they grow tired of themselves and their country-seat. And now tell me, love, how do you mean to amuse yourself? What have you done—what are you going to do? As soon as you have made yourself fit to be seen, I conclude you will want to show your diamonds. What box are you to have at the Opera?"

"None," replied Frederica. "Rawleigh is not particularly fond of music: and as he has had a great deal to do in furnishing his house this year, I mean to dispense with the indulgence."

"But *you* used to be so passionately fond of music."

"And am so still; but I should not like him to incur an expense that might be inconvenient."

"Nonsense, expense! How I do detest these workhouse grumblings. Have you not seven or eight thousand a-year?"

"Which, as you must be aware, will only serve to maintain our establishment, and bring us to town for the season."

"When I see Rawleigh I shall insist on his opening his purse-strings. A first season is much too early a date for stinginess."

"Pray do not even mention the subject. I cannot bear him to think I have a wish ungratified."

"While I am only bent upon the actual gratification of mine. I had set my heart, Frederica, on your sharing my box. I like no female society *half* so much as yours; and what can a miserable hundred pounds signify to Rawleigh, compared with the pleasure we shall have in being together?"

"A hundred pounds! Is it only *one* hundred pounds?—Oh! then I can easily afford myself the gratification out of my pin money. I have four hundred a-year, and have spent nothing at present."

"While I have five, and am over head and ears in debt!—Then I shall consider the matter settled, dearest Frederica. May I expect you to-night?"

"On Saturday, if you please," said Lady Rawleigh, rising and

taking leave. "I will not disgrace you by my appearance till I have humanized my barbarous Warwickshire fashions."

This little affair had been arranged with so much haste and facility, that Frederica did not imagine she could experience the slightest embarrassment in explaining it to her husband. Yet when she found herself actually seated opposite Sir Brooke at dinner, listening to the news he had heard at the Travellers, and the messages he had received for her from different friends in the Park, she began to premeditate her opening phrase for the discussion;—a circumstance of rare occurrence with the frank and warm-hearted Frederica. But her attention was soon diverted from herself and her opera-box, by the name of "Miss Elbany."

"I looked in at your mother's as I came home, Fred., to inquire whether she had any tidings of Launceston. You did not tell me what a beautiful girl she has got for a companion. Positively I never saw a more superb creature."

"Exactly the terms in which you praise Launceston's bay hunter! —Miss Elbany is a fine showy vulgar-looking girl; much too forward in her manners for her situation in life."

"*You* pretty little slight goddesses of beauty," said Sir Brooke, laughing, "are always inveterate against the ox-eyed Junos like Miss Elbany. But though both tall and fully-formed, *your* mother's young friend is neither coarse nor vulgar."

"Pray do not call her *my* mother's young friend. I trust this paragon is not to be brought forward in *that* capacity. Her office in Charles-street is limited to winding silk for Lady Launceston—opening and shutting the wicket of Chloe's basket—and playing piquet when mamma is out of spirits."

"Very much like the sentence of condemnation passed upon Squire Thornhill in the Vicar of Wakefield, as a punishment for running away with Miss Primrose! Seriously, my dear Frederica, I never heard you speak or judge so ungenerously before."

Lady Rawleigh blushed over her wing of the chicken, for her conscience convicted her of all the meanness of jealousy. Not of the superior charms of this importunate Miss Elbany, but of the interest she had contrived to excite in the bosoms of all her nearest relatives. Never, in fact, had poor Frederica passed a more comfortless dinner! She had a circumstance weighing on her mind which she was reluctant to impart to her husband, and could forgive neither her mother's companion, nor her mother's daughter, for their rivalry in Lady Launceston's affections.

"I have promised to go to Lady Huntingfield to-night," said she, in a somewhat peevish accent, as she sipped her coffee. "She is to have some very good music; and I ventured to answer for *you*."

"Did you?" said Sir Brooke, who, having niched himself into an arm-chair, was enjoying that species of chaotic mental vagary, in which country gentlemen, who devote six months of the twelve to the suppression of the fox, are apt to indulge after a dinner of three courses. "I am sorry for that. I hate dressing after dinner, just when one wants to be comfortable. And do you know I half promised we would drop in on your mother. She has a bad cold—and said something about whist; and *there*, you know, my boots and black tie will be admissible."

"I am sure some men look on the faculty of wearing dusty boots as one of the main indulgences of human existence!" murmured Frederica.

"I had a late engagement, or I should not have appeared at table with *you* in my morning boots," said Rawleigh, somewhat roused by this conjugal reflection. And he hitched himself still more commodiously into his morocco dormitory, doubly resolved not to go to Lady Huntingfield's.

"Mamma keeps such early hours when she is indisposed," resumed Frederica, sorry she had unnecessarily affronted her husband's boots, "that perhaps I had better order the carriage without further delay?"

"The carriage?—Oh, no!—de let us walk. It is a beautiful night, and we can take the key, and cross the square to Charles-street; unless, indeed," continued Sir Brooke, opening his sleepy eyes, and fixing them good-humouredly upon his lovely wife, "you intend to crush poor Miss Elbany's pretensions at once, by appearing in full dress?"

"Miss Elbany?—I had forgotten her very existence. I will be ready for you in a moment," said Lady Rawleigh, ringing for her maid and her shawl, that she might incur no further suspicion of coquetry by retiring to her dressing-room. And being speedily equipped in her Rawleighford garden attire, she looked so pretty, and reminded him so strongly of home, that Sir Brooke, in spite of her sarcasm on his negligence of dress, held her very closely and fondly upon his arm during their short journey to the residence of Lady Launceston.

The ears of the gentle Frederica, which had prepared themselves for the pianissimo tones exacted by her mother on occasion of colds or headaches, or such minor indispositions as could be permitted to take their course without the aid of a nightcap and Dr. Camomile, were something startled as she trod upon the Axminster stair-carpet, where the "blind mole" was rarely permitted to "hear a foot fall,"—by peals of vehement laughter proceeding from the drawing-room; and the words, "that horrid Miss Elbany!" were

rising to her lips, when the announcement of "Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh, my lady!" whispered towards her mother's easy chair, produced a shout of "Ha! Rawleigh, my dear fellow—I'm glad to see you!" from her brother.

Lord Launceston, who was unceremoniously stretched at full length upon his mother's damask sofa, with boots far less guiltless of offence than those of Sir Brooke, having arrived unexpectedly in town, to dinner, had found his spirit moved by the sight of Lucy Elbany's bright eyes, to exert himself far more for the amusement of his mother, than he had done before in the course of his six-and-twenty years; and it appeared to Frederica that her visit to Charles-street, which was to cost her the sacrifice of Lady Huntingford's concert, was any thing but acceptable to the parties concerned. She thought "the companion" made more fuss than was necessary in ringing for an addition to the tea-table, and in hoping Lady Rawleigh would not find the room too warm; while, in fact, poor Frederica was only hurt to find any one but her mother doing the honours of *that* room to her at all. It had been the scene of her progress from childhood to maturity; of her affectionate attendance upon her parents; of the courtship and acceptance of her dear Rawleigh; and *there*—even there—sat the companion;—hoping she did not feel the wind from the door, and inquiring whether she preferred black or green tea!—

But if her presidency at the tea-table was offensive, what could be said of her interference at the whist-table;—wheeling round Lady Launceston's chair, adjusting the candle-shades, sorting her cards, counting her tricks! Frederica actually shrugged her shoulders with irritation;—for Sir Brooke, usually so quiet and reserved in his address to strangers, took it into his head to utter the most extravagant compliments to Miss Elbany's graceful assiduities; while Lord Launceston made secret signs to her of somewhat contemptuous admiration of his mother's protégée, and of Rawleigh's undisguised admiration.

Surprised, vexed, and mortified, Lady Rawleigh lost rubber after rubber, to the indignation of her brother, and the triumph of her husband; and she was heartily glad when her mother's small covered basin of Dresden china made its appearance, with two taper sticks of dried toast; at which accustomed signal, Chloe jumped from her basket to yelp her vesper adieu to the butler, and give the signal for a general move.

"Now then!" thought she, as she found herself once more among the rustling lilac-bushes in Berkeley-square, "now, while he cannot observe my embarrassment, I will tell him the history of the opera-box.—I have been committing a little extravagance this

morning," said she aloud, somewhat intimidated by the sound of her own voice.

"So I perceived, by the silver paper parcels lying on your dressing-room table. I hope there is a handsome present for *me* in the collection?"

"Oh! something far worse than you dream of!—*Those* were little mother-of-pearl fopperies for my boudoir at Rawleighford; but my crime is one of greater enormity than could be committed at Howell and James's."

"I do not believe it, Frederica, for two reasons; first, because you are too reasonable to be wantonly extravagant at any time;—and secondly, because I ventured to confide to you the necessity for a little prudence, to set us off clear in the world, next year."

"But this weighty affair does not concern Mr. Ruggs and his financial budget. It is a private business relating to my pin-money."

Frederica fancied she could detect a little start on the part of her companion at the word, as if it were displeasing to him.

"If it is a *private* business, my love, you need scarcely confide it to me."

"Oh! it is only private as far as regards the ways and means; it involves your person and consent quite as much as mine. I have engaged to take half Louisa Erskyne's opera-box; and I hope you will not refuse me the favour of accepting one of the tickets?"

Unfortunately they had just arrived at the interposing gate of the square; and Sir Brooke deliberately unlocked, swang open, and relocked it, and even crossed over to the pavement, before he attempted a reply. Frederica was apprehensive she should have to repeat the phrase she had found it so inconvenient and disagreeable to utter;—and when at length he commenced his answer, it was far more formal and unaffectionate than she was in the habit of receiving from his lips.

"I was not aware that I had ever refused any request of yours;—and when I proposed to you to forego the Opera for the present season, I acted, my dear, on your assurance that you had not the smallest inclination for a box, and that you should find your private engagements quite a sufficient tie upon your time. I am sorry you deceived me; and still more sorry that the first use you make of your independence, will bring you in such close contact with a woman so notoriously giddy as Mrs. William Erskyne."

"I have no reason to think ill of my friend Louisa," said Lady Rawleigh; her heart swelling under the first reproof she had ever received from her husband. "You always desire me to consult my own inclinations on such trivial occasions. However, since you d'

approve this Opera scheme, I will write to Mrs. Erskyne, and persuade her to excuse me."

" By no means!—I would on no account have you provoke the attention of one of the most mischievous tongues in London to any difference of opinion existing between us. Nay!—to show you that I entertain no harsh feeling on the subject, I accept your proffered ticket; and will share with you an amusement which you rejected a fortnight ago,—as I then hoped,—in compliment to *me*, And now let us discuss something else. Did you ever see Launceston in such spirits? He talks of passing the season in town,—asked me to look out for a pair of horses for him,—and wants you to make a water-party."

" And include Miss Elbany?"

" It would be very unkind to omit her; and so handsome and agreeable a girl would make a charming addition, I am glad we took this house in Bruton-street," he continued, " knocking at his own door, " instead of the one Mrs. Derenzy wrote to us about in Cavendish-square. It will enable us to see a great deal of your mother;—and really, Frederica, we can *now* make up a very pleasant little family-party among ourselves."

" Again that odious Miss Elbany!" thought Frederica, as she ran up stairs towards her dressing-room. And she closed her eyes that night, with a heart more resentfully disposed towards Sir Brooke than it had ever been since the days of Laura Mapleberry and the nervous headaches.

CHAPTER IV.

All higher knowledge in her presence fails
Degraded—wisdom in discourse with her
Loses discountenanced, and like folly shows.

MILTON,

THE following morning had been anticipated by Lady Rawleigh as one of considerable personal interest. She was to decide on the dress for her presentation; and Mrs. Erskyne had promised to come and assist her choice with all the discrimination of her tact and experience. But Frederica felt so discomfited by the disapprobation expressed by Sir Brooke of her friend Louisa, that all her coquetry on the subject of her dress was chilled into indifference; and she would have been perfectly satisfied to make her appearance at St. James's in the train of rose-coloured brocade in which Mrs. Martha Derenzy paid her devoirs to Queen Charlotte on occasion of the birth of the Bishop of Osnaburgh; a

substance boasting the consistency of a wainscot of moderate solidity.

At two o'clock, however, when the purple-edged bandboxes of the mantua-maker were deposited upon the sofas and tables of her dressing-room, and, with closed doors and the gallery cleared, the blondes, and satins, and moires, were successively exhibited, the thermometer of feminine vanity rose even to fever heat; and she soon became as deeply involved in the comparative merits of figured and watered silk, as the renowned Mrs. Bellamy in those of her Statira costume! On finding that her former rival, Latura Mapleberry, was to be presented at the same drawing-room, in her bridal capacity as Lady Lotus, she actually caused her jewel-box to be opened, that she might try the effect of her wheat-ears and diamond necklace upon the rich brocades between which her choice was undecided; and ended by selecting a dress at least thrice as splendid as she had originally intended.

"I own I am anxious that Rawleigh should be gratified by my appearance on the occasion," thought Frederica, as she replaced the sparkling wheat-ears in her jewel-box. "And as no one has a right to interfere with the distribution of my pin-money, my extravagance will in this instance pass unreproved."

"Heigh-day!—the doors locked? What mysteries are on foot?" cried a voice in the corridor, while the handle of the dressing-room-door was violently agitated. "My dear Frederica, I beg I may not intrude—I would not disturb you for the world. But I have something particular to say to you; and I met Sir Brooke in Bond-street, who assured me that I should find you at home and disengaged. Yes! my dear,—I left a very interesting sale of marbles unfinished at Stanley's, that I might not lose the opportunity of finding you alone."

"Not alone,—but always very happy to welcome you," said Lady Rawleigh, unlocking the door to admit Lady Olivia Tadcaster, whom she sincerely wished back again in the Rotterdam packet.

"What have we here, my dear, what have we here? You know I like to see pretty things! Oh!—your court-dress; well, what have you chosen? Not violet, I hope. You will be taken for a bishop's wife, or daughter,—or grandmother, if you intend to bury yourself in that horrible flounce!" continued Lady Olivia, as the *couturière* obligingly withdrew the rustling tissue-paper from the cases.

"My dear Mrs. Erskyne, how do you do? Sorry I have not been able to leave a card at your door. But I only returned from the continent three days ago; and have been all the morning at the Treasury trying to get a private order to pass my baggage."

fancy I am as well known at Dover as the signal-post; I often tell Birmingham he ought to give me a per-centage for helping him through his business.—My dear Frederica, you are keeping this young person waiting. Do send her away with her rattle-traps, for positively I cannot allow you to be imposed upon with the purchase of such obsolete splendours. You will look like a last year's number of the *Journal des Modes*.—Mademoiselle, these flowers are quite out of date—Mrs. Pasley, have the goodness to show this young person down stairs; I wish for a little conversation with my niece. {My dear Frederica! are you *mad* to throw away your money in this sort of frivolous manner? My carriage is waiting. I have twenty minutes to spare; and will take you to Sewell and Cross's, or Waterloo House, where we can inquire the price of white satin. I dare say Mrs. Erskyne you will come with us?"}

"Thank you, Lady Olivia, I have no hope that my life will last long enough, to waste any part of it in dancing attendance at the counter of a bargain-shop. My femme de chambre saves me the degrading detail of knowing how many yards of tiffany and ribbon it requires to make me endurable. Farewell, dearest Fred., I shall see you to-morrow night at the Opera."

"A very lightheaded, unprincipled little person!" said Lady Olivia, throwing herself upon the sofa. "I hope, my dear niece, you will not pass much of your time in her society. I shall give my advice to Sir Brooke upon *that* subject, the very first time we meet. Well, Frederica, I have been sitting with your mother this morning; and my visit has made me *very* uneasy on her account."

"Indeed! is her cold increased?"

"Increased!—how *could* it possibly increase? I drove down yesterday to the Strand, to the only shop in London where one is sure of getting genuine Welsh flannel, and bought two yards, which I wadded into a breastplate with my own hands. Did you ever see what I call one of my woollen cuirasses? And then, I went on to Newbery's in St. Paul's Churchyard, for some pectoral essence of Tussilago, and some coltsfoot lozenges in case she should not like it in a fluid state; so that, of course, I was not surprised this morning when I breakfasted with her to find her greatly relieved."

"Then what makes you anxious about mamma?"

"Her folly, my love—her folly! What can possibly put it into her head to settle a designing young creature, like that odious Miss Elbany, in the house with my nephew?"

"But Launceston never lives in Charles-street. He is staying at the Clarendon."

"Nevertheless, I found him quietly taking his chocolate in my

sister's dressing-room this morning ; with that Miss Elbany smiling and blushing at him like a crocodile."

"My dear aunt, you must be dreaming ! Launceston was never out of his room in London, before twelve o'clock, in his life. Nothing less important than a fox overcomes his natural indolence."

"And a greater fox than your mother's companion never put forth its attractions."

"I am quite of your opinion. My prejudices against that Miss Elbany require no aggravation. But what can we do ?—To warn Launceston against the danger, would perhaps insinuate a notion into his head, that might not otherwise find its way there."

"Oh ! I see exactly how it will be !—My poor nephew, who is too indolent to go through the labour of making himself agreeable in his proper sphere, will be captivated by the cunning of a fine showy girl, always at hand to amuse and flatter him ; and Marston Park will become the prey of a pack of needy adventurers."

"And poor William fall into hands unworthy to influence his fine ingenuous disposition !"

"Believe me, I am much too well acquainted with his fine ingenuous disposition, to think of opposing his admiration for this creature. For if he suspected a combination against him, he would run away with her to-morrow to prove his independence. But you must persuade Rawleigh to pass a great deal of his time in Charles-street, and be on the look out."

"I trust Sir Brooke *will* be frequently there, because my chief object in town is to attend upon mamma. But I should never dream of requesting my husband to act as a spy."

"Thank Heaven, I am less scrupulous when the honour of the family is at stake ! I shall make it a point to carry this Miss Elbany about with me on all occasions ;—I will take care she is seldom left in Charles-street, in my nephew's way ;—and I know he would as soon find his way into my carriage, as into an apothecary's shop. I make it a rule to keep aniseed in the pockets to guard the lining against moths."

"But you cannot be always driving about," said Lady Rawleigh, with an involuntary smile. "Besides, my mother must not be left too much alone."

"Certainly not; But I shall make it a rule to dine and pass the evening with my sister,—whenever I have nothing else to do."

"That is very kind of you."

"My dear Frederica, I never scruple to sacrifice my time to the interests of my family. To be sure, to day, I dine with Lady Quidley, who is shut up with a sprained ankle; to-morrow, "

old Mrs. Warde, for whom I brought over a great lumbering *comme*
mode from Paris; on Thursday, with the Wermingtons, whose son
made himself so very useful to me at Carlsbad; Friday a formal
dinner in Piccadilly,—all the Tadcaster family to meet me at the
Duke's, on my return. Saturday, I have promised to go down to
Richmond, to show the lions at Hampton Court to a charming
family of the ancient Bohemian noblesse, whom I met in the packet-
boat on the Rhine: and on my return, poor Lady Henry Vardon,
the *divorcée*, pays me her annual visit. While *she* is with me, you
know, my dear, I become a dead letter. For I can neither receive
visitors, nor take her to other people's houses,—who, *entre nous*,
look upon her as an inadmissible impropriety. So I generally
occupy myself while she is with me in looking over and sorting my
papers,—answering my letters, verifying the inventories of my
plate, linen, books, and furniture; and receiving the annual docu-
ments of my Shropshire estates."

"Very amusing for poor Lady Henry!—But I suppose she finds it preferable to her solitary cottage at Bedfont."

"But I am idling away my morning here!" cried Lady Olivia, suddenly starting up, "and have fifty appointments before dinner-time. Now do not make yourself uneasy, my dear Fred., about what I told you respecting your brother; for though I have no doubt in my own mind that he will throw himself away upon this artful, sycophantic creature, there can be no reason for you to distress yourself on the subject. Good-bye, my love. As I pass Compton House, I shall look in, and send you a few silks for your selection, for this unfortunate court-dress of yours. Good-bye, my dear;—don't trouble yourself to ring the bell,—I shall find my servants in the hall. I never allow them to go down stairs in any one's house, except Archdeacon Drinkwater's, where the golden rule is written, framed, and glazed, in the servants' hall. I have got a little something for you, Frederica, among my baggage, when I can get it up from Dover; a trifle, to show you, my dear, that I thought of my dear niece in the splendid City. And I shall certainly stop the carriage, and speak a word or two to Launceston if I happen to meet him. But, for goodness' sake, not a word of the little hint I have given you, if he should happen to call here this morning!"

"You may rely on me," said Lady Rawleigh, as the reeding murmurs of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's twaddle rose fainter and fainter up the well staircase from the hall; and right glad was she to perceive on looking from her dressing-room window, to assure herself of the actual departure of the fidgeting aunt, that her own ka was in waiting, to convey her from the united vexations

of Miss Elbany—the court dress—the opera-box—the indiscretions of Mrs. William Erskyne—and the officious interference of Lady Olivia.

CHAPTER V.

A city dame,
Born to adorn with ample garniture
The pageants of the guild, and melt away
Sir Frugal's ingots in the busy mart
Of west-world poppery,—the play, the ring,
The motley masque.

VANE'S "HERACLEA."

LADY RAWLEIGH, remote from fashionable dissipation, had persuaded herself, during the perfect contentment of her existence at Rawleighford, that she had completely lost her taste for the glare of the ball-room, the stirring tones of the orchestra, the glittering of gaudy apparel. While loitering with Sir Brooke among the clay-trenches, and gravelly excavations, and burrows of bog-earth, forming the chaos which promised to assume the perfection of an American Eden some future summer, she was tempted to exclaim, like Wolsey at the gates of Leicester Abbey—

Vain pomp and glory of the world—I hate ye!

But the heart of the country clodpole responds not more readily to the pipe and drum with which the cunning sergeant baits his recruiting hook in the village market-place, than that of a woman born and educated in and for the great world, to the harmonious discords of clashing carriages, yelling link-boys, swearing coachmen, and reproving policemen. Seated beside her friend Louisa Erskyne, in the unlucky opera-box, she fancied that her vivid impressions of self-satisfaction were solely derived from the pathetic tones of Malibran, the well-attuned precision of the symphonies breathed in her ears, and the comprehensive charm of a combination of “sweet sights, sweet sounds, sweet sentiments.”

But it was not so. Lady Rawleigh’s animated interest in the scene arose chiefly from the gratification of her own vanity; combined with that buoyancy of temperament which is the result of youthful health and innocence of heart. She would in fact have been quite satisfied with herself and all around her, had not Mrs. Erskyne, in a momentary *tête-à-tête* after a succession of visitors had enlivened their box, congratulated her at once on her good looks and good fortune.

“ You are *en triomph* to-night, Frederica. I never saw you so

pretty. Lord Calder evidently visited us to form his judgment of the *débutante*."

"What *débutante*? Is there a new dancer?"

"Dancer? Absurd!—as if a subscriber to the *Omnibus* would bury himself at the back of a box like this, to decide on the merits of a dancer! It was *yourself*, my dear, on whom he was passing sentence; and by to-morrow night your fate and fashion will be proclaimed in all the clubs of St. James's-street."

"Lord Calder did not appear satisfied with his opportunity of observation," said Lady Rawleigh, smiling, but not disapprovingly, at the levity of her friend; "for he has given me a general invitation to his suppers."

"And shall you go to-night?" inquired Louisa, in a tone of chagrin that the distinction had not been extended to herself.

"To-night I have promised to go to my country neighbour, Mrs. Luttrell's ball, who lives at the antipodes,—somewhere in the Regent's-park."

"On Saturday, then?"

"Oh, no—certainly not; we never keep late hours on Saturday night, on account of their influence in the establishment, on Sunday morning."

"What a prim little Mrs. Goodchild it is!" cried Louisa, with an ironical laugh. "But next Tuesday—surely you will go to Calder House on Tuesday?"

"Most likely not—Rawleigh knows very little of Lord Calder; and I am not anxious to entangle myself in his set. I am too vain, and perhaps too proud to like the society of a man of his description."

"What description? Your vanity must be ravenous indeed, to be dissatisfied with Lord Calder's evident admiration."

"But my pride would shrink from the adulation requisite to maintain a place in his good opinion. A sensualist of a certain age, endowed with a princely fortune to further his inclinations, delights to grace his circle with the young and pretty women of society; just as the Duke of Sutherland achieves the acquisition of a new work of art, or you and I, Louisa, adorn our drawing-rooms with rose-trees."

"A very laudable instance of good taste."

"In my opinion nothing can be so humiliating as the exactions of such a society. A younger man would consider his gallantry taxed to make himself doubly agreeable, lest he should be eclipsed by the splendours which surround him; whereas at Lord Calder's—"

"We are all expected to be at his feet. Very true; and the estimation towards anything but royalty, is a degradation not to be

endured by a woman who finds herself an object of adoration elsewhere."

"Or of respect in her own happy home," added Lady Rawleigh, in a lower voice, as if dreading the raillery of her companion.

"The eagerness which Lord Calder's set display in their rivalship for his notice, certainly *does* provoke me at times. After all, I am very glad he has never invited *me* to his suppers."

"After *all*? Why, had you ever an inclination to belong to that clique?"

"Oh! dear, no. I love my liberty and myself far too well. But it does look odd, you know, to live so much in the same set, and never be invited to his parties; which, let the host be what he may, are certainly the best to be had for love—or fashion."

Mrs. Erskyne did not think it necessary to enlarge on this vexations topic; or to inform Frederica that she had heard in confidence from the dear friend of a dear friend, of a very dear friend of his lordship, that she had been unanimously blackballed, on a proposal for her admittance into the coterie at Calder House, on the grounds of

that sarcastic levity of tongue,

which never fails to create bitterness and misunderstanding among a set of idle people devoted to scandal and tittle-tattle, but morbidly sensitive whenever the slightest whisper appears to reflect upon themselves.

"Mrs. Erskyne is a pretty, piquante little creature," was Lord Calder's sentence of exclusion; "but too *tracassière* to be permitted to ruffle the smooth surface of society with which I am desirous of surrounding myself. Even summer lightning, pretty and playful as it is, is formed by the reflection of some distant storm."

Sir Brooke now made his appearance in the box, accompanied by a tall, thin, eager-looking man, whom he named to Lady Rawleigh as his friend, Mr. Lexley, and to whom Mrs. Erskyne extended a bow of abhorrent recognition. She was rejoiced that none of her fashionable and fastidious danglers happened to be present, to be driven away by the approach of a bore so pre-eminently and universally recognised as Mr. Lexley—a man so flustered with hurry, that he always appeared to have left his mind behind him; and whose unconnected discourse, and uncollected features, seemed to have been dispersed by arduous perplexity of business; whereas the only business he had ever transacted in his life was, to sit, session after session, upon a hard bench, and say, "Ay," or "No," in the name of one of the most inactive and long-suffering boroughs in his majesty's dominions!

"Malibran has been delightful this evening," observed Frederica, anxious to bestow a gracious reception upon any person qualified by Sir Brooke as his "friend," however ragged his locks, or uncouth his mode of retaining possession of a full-grown morning hat, bearing visible tokens of Strand manufacture.

"Indeed!—I am glad to hear it. I have only been here a few minutes, and was detained in passing through the room by Lord Warspite.—A little Admiralty business to be talked over."

"Every one dines so late now," resumed Lady Rawleigh, "that gentlemen have very little chance of hearing any thing of the Opera, unless a few determined amateurs who come for the overture."

"Dine!" exclaimed Mr. Lexley, horrified that any person could believe him guilty of a late dinner during the sitting of parliament. "I wish I could flatter myself of being so agreeably detained from any engagement for some time to come. I don't suppose I have passed two hours at table, for the last two months!"

"A very harassing session," observed Sir Brooke, sympathisingly.

Mr. Lexley shook his head with a contracted eyebrow and desponding lip; while he thumbed his great heavy hat with the industry of a kneader of pottery-ware.

"Any thing doing to night in the house?"

"Nothing *very* important;—the last reading of the salt-water canal bill,—all smooth sailing, or you would not have seen me here. I left Lumber on his legs, and Trap had thrown in a few of his keen discouraging sentences."

"Like so many drops of vitriolic acid," observed Mrs. Erskyne, without diverting her gaze from the ballet.

"And of course Sir Bumble Drone, and the other county member, must go through their short generalizing answers. All that will last till a quarter before twelve, when the whale-fishery business comes on;—and I must be back at one for the division, or I shall get into disgrace," said Mr. Lexley, with a grim smile, and an elevation of his camelopardic throat, intended to imply the proud consciousness of independence.

"I wonder you venture to be out of the way," said Mrs. Erskyne, gravely. "Even on questions where it is not your intention to speak, I have no doubt you are incessantly bored by references for precedents. Erskyne tells me that no one could get on without you. Now this whale-fishery!—I dare say, if the truth were known, Mr. Lexley, *you* were in the secret of that article on the subject in the Quarterly? Surely, surely, you ought not to be out of the way when it is before the house?"

"Oh! I have still twenty-five minutes at my disposal," said

Lexley, taking out a watch of the shape and dimensions of a mortar; "even allowing five, to go round by Arlington-street and pick up my friend Phaganhurst, whom no one can get away from his claret but myself.—We shall want his vote to-night. In the meantime, I have just got a word or two to say to Lord Wilchester, about the Helvoetaluys beacon business, of which he has given notice for Thursday se'nnight; I fancy he is somewhere in the house."

" You will find him in his stall behind the double bass," said Mrs. Erskyne, eager to get rid of their visitor on any terms. " His bald head is as prominent a feature as that of the new palace."

" Thank you, my dear Mrs. Erskyne—thank you! I never venture among the stalls. If you hazard a word in a tone louder than the pianissimo of Nicholson's flute, every member—that is every dilettante,—turns fiercely round, as if you were out of order."

" Do you intend to stay out the ballet?" inquired Sir Brooke of his wife, disgusted by the want of courtesy displayed by Mrs. Erskyne to his friend. " If you think of going to Mrs. Luttrell's, had I not better inquire for the carriage?"

" Pray do," replied Frederica, as Louisa turned to welcome the entrance of Sir Robert Morse, the mutual flirt of their young-lady days; " or rather, let us go at once."

" Well, my dear Fred!" exclaimed Rawleigh, drawing up the window of the chariot, while—after a fierce contention with a wrangling mob of coachmen, and a confused phalanx of carriage, they worked their way through Regent-street, in the direction of the Regent's-park,—" how glad I am to find myself once more alone with you. I have something of consequence to say."

" Nothing about Launceston, I hope?"

" No! nor about Miss Elbany,—in spite of Lady Olivia's agonies."

" She has confided her apprehensions to you, then?"

" Actually stopped her carriage opposite to Boodle's, this morning, and sent in her footman to desire I would come and speak to her. There I sat, closeted with her, for a quarter of an hour, listening to her predictions of a marriage between your brother and your mother's companion, in an atmosphere resembling that of Savory and Moore's shop; with the certainty of being quizzed to death on my return to the club, touching this family consultation. But enough of Lady Olivia. My business is of a more important nature. Do you know, Frederica, that with Lexley's assistance, I have just now a capital opportunity of getting into parliament."

" But is it worth while to go through the trouble and expense with a general election so near at hand?"

"The trouble will consist in passing a couple of hours at the Blue Lion or Black Boar at Martwich; and the expense be of course commensurate with the diminished value of the seat. Still it is an expense; and my only demur on the subject arises from a disinclination to appropriate a considerable sum to the indulgence of my selfish predilections, after urging economy in our establishment."

"My dearest Rawleigh!—You talk as if I did not participate in your pleasures and distinctions;—as if we had separate interests!"

"And so we have!" answered Sir Brooke, between jest and earnest, but affectionately pressing her hand. "Remember the pin-money and the opera-box! However, I shall write to Ruggs to-morrow, for the surveyor's report on the timber of the Oxley estate. Indeed, I am pretty sure I can raise the necessary sum without much inconvenience, provided I can persuade you to make a sacrifice of the new conservatory, and forgive me if I occasionally bring forward the subject of economy in our domestic arrangements."

"You can have very little confidence in me to make my concurrence a matter of doubt," said Lady Rawleigh, gratified by an opportunity of marking her sympathy in her husband's interests. "I will become as prudent as Mrs. Martha Derenzy; emulate her lectures on the advantage of ready money and discount; and you shall reward me with five *franks* a-day. But what has that tiresome Mr. Lexley to do with the business?"

"I hope you do not allow yourself to be infected by the silly prejudices and antipathies of your friend, Mrs. Erskyne? Lexley is not a lady's man, I acknowledge; but he is a useful and active member of society."

"Of society? He appears to me to forget that he is anything but a member of—parliament."

"Perhaps he may be a *little* too fond of fetching and carrying, in the petty business of the House. But notwithstanding his foible, he is an estimable man,—with very clean hands, and a very sound heart."

"Very dirty gloves, and a very intrusive hat! But how is he to assist you in this borough affair?"

"Why he happens to be the sort of person whom people are apt to refer to in the agency of this species of confidential traffic. He has a friend with a seat to dispose of, just now, under circumstances highly advantageous to me; and I have promised to dine with him to-morrow, and settle the business."

They were now in the string of carriages leading to Mrs. Luttrell's *fête*, and within view of those elaborate festive preparations, with which persons of moderate means, moderate mansions,

and an acquaintance of the moderate class, affect to rival the hospitalities of the highest class. The front of a tolerably proportioned house overlooking the Regent's-park, was converted, by the temporary aid of floor-cloth and tarpaulin, into a conservatory, smelling of anything but roses and jessamine; while stars of ill-trimmed variegated lamps, flaring and smoking, added their unlucky odours to the malaria of the spot. The hall of Mrs. Luttrell's abode was metamorphosed by a screen of withering laurel-branches into a rural retreat; in which some eight or ten footmen,—with the glaring liveries of the family hanging voluminously upon the shoulders of half the gang, and betraying them as hirelings for the occasion,—exerted the utmost fury of their lungs to announce the entering guests. It would have been difficult to decide which was the preponderating discord in this house of feasting—the yells of a band of ill-bred servants, or the twang of an orchestra, of which the musicians appeared to measure their own merit by the volume of sound they could severally produce.

At the door of the ball-room stood the curtseying and over-heated Mrs. Luttrell, charmed to behold the extent of the mob she had collected to stare at her diamond tiara, and arrayed in a silver tissue robe, studded with bouquets of foil, which compelled her to a standing position. She took care to be engaged in eager conversation when the announcement of "Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh" met her ear, in order that her vulgar butler might think it necessary to indulge in a stentorian repetition of the gratifying sound, for the edification of the company near the door; for poor Mrs. Luttrell, being strictly confined within the limits of mediocratic society, conceived that a ladyship of any sort was good for something, and had already made up her mind that, since her distant relative had been so aspiring as to unite himself with the daughter of a viscountess, the name of the Honourable Lady Rawleigh should grace her *Morning Post* advertisement on the morrow, in company with Messrs. Rosin's incomparable band and Messrs. Gunter's delicacies of the season.

Escaping as quickly as possible from the courtesies of a lady who "'oped they had got up to the door without much difficulty," the Rawleighs manœuvred their way round the skirts of a quadrille, which shook the foundations of the house, into the second drawing-room; where Frederica, by the aid of certain old-fashioned diamond-aigrettes with which she had been intimately acquainted for the last five years, contrived to recognise divers ancient matrons and untireable chaperons—Lady Launceston's former contemporaries at the card-table.

But what was her amazement on perceiving in the midst of one of these grisly groups her giddy brother; listening without much show of impatience to the obsequious discourse of a fat middle-aged woman, arrayed in a turban which might have served the Pacha Abomelique in a representation of Blue Beard at the Theatre Royal Birmingham. Lord Launceston started with surprise; but speedily rose, and joined his sister and her husband.

"What on earth are you doing here?" whispered Frederica.

"Business, Fred., business! You see I have a better excuse than yourself; for I should hardly think *you* would plead either business or pleasure as your inducement."

"Hush! Mrs. Luttrell is a distant connexion of Rawleigh's."

"Is that a reason for suffocating yourself with the vapours of lavender-water, huile antique, and hired argands?"

"Have you any better motive for your devotion to yonder fair Odalisque?"

"*That* is my future mother-in-law," said Lord Launceston, calmly. "You know I have long been in search of an heiress; and these people, who are soap-boilers, or some such thing, were so obliging as to fall in love with me at Cowes, last summer, and save me all further trouble."

"My dear Launceston! you do not really mean that you have serious thoughts of allying yourself with that horrible woman?"

"I never had serious thoughts of anything in my life; except once, when I was going to be flogged at Eton, and had some notion of caning the Doctor by way of preventative. But Mrs. Waddlestone has *very* serious thoughts of allying herself with *me*. Would you like to see my bride elect?"

"Certainly not *as* your bride elect," replied Lady Rawleigh, turning with a look of anxious inquiry towards the quadrille, and fixing her eyes upon a juvenile mummy forming a most afflicting miniature of the lady in the turban.

"Quite wrong, Fred.! You have not the least touch of animal magnetism in your composition, or you would have found out your future sister at first sight," said Lord Launceston, smiling, and nodding with an air of good understanding to a fair and graceful sylph, dancing with the gentle tranquillity of Madame Michau's choicest scholar, and dressed with a perfection of elegance which even the fastidious Louisa Erskyne could not have taxed with an error of taste.

"Is not Leonora charming?" said Lord Launceston, with an ironical smile.

"Charming, indeed; but no Leonora *Waddlestone*, I am persuaded. She must have been changed in her cradle by a fairy or an Irish nurse."

"The strawberry sipest grows beneath the nettle!"

Replied her brother. "You very fine ladies are little aware how much beauty and accomplishment is to be met with in the secondary set of London society. Fortunately for me, my beggary brought me among these soap-boilers, and brewers, and other nonentities; and I shall consequently bless myself with the prettiest as well as the richest wife in the peerage."

"You cannot *really* entertain thoughts of forming this *mésalliance*?" said Lady Rawleigh, who began to think that even the companion—if an orphan—might have been preferable to a Leonora Waddlestone, with such a mother.

"No treason against my Leonora!" said Launceston, gravely.

"But against your mother-in-law?"

"What possible fault can you find with her? That crimson satin robe was part of the spoil of Tippoo Saib's wardrobe. She told me so herself. And only look at her pearls:—

'Each pendant in her ear shall be a province.'

"Oh! Launceston, Launceston!"

"If you utter one injurious sentence respecting her, I will instantly present her to you—a punishment of some severity, for she will take particular care neither to forget you nor be forgotten."

"She certainly appeared very satisfactorily engrossed by her conversation with yourself when I entered the room."

"I flatter myself she loves me like a son; and am *certain* she loves me like a lord!—which is a degree of greater warmth in Mrs. Waddlestone's estimation."

"Mrs. Waddlestone!—I am beginning to shudder when you pronounce the name!"

"Leonora will lose it, you know, in becoming your sister. I have been dancing with her all the evening, and only resigned my place to your old friend, Colonel Rhyse, that I may enjoy a little of Mrs. Waddlestone's conversation."

"Again!—*Waddlestone!*—The sound an echo to the sense."

"Launceston!" exclaimed Sir Brooke, who had been detained from their dialogue by the civilities of Mr. Luttrell, a respectable gentleman, with very large calves and a powdered head, whom strangers usually mistook for the butler, "it is a rare thing to meet you in a ball-room. Will you make my excuses to your mother, my dear fellow, and tell her she must be satisfied with Frederica alone to-morrow; for I am obliged to dine with Lexley, on particular business."

"I should think you would dine with the brute on no other motive. However, I will take care of my sister. There will be

large party in Charles-street to introduce Miss Elbany to the family."

"I really think mamma is bewitched by that girl!" cried Lady Rawleigh.

"Who is *not?*" replied her brother, with something very much resembling a sigh.

"You had better invite your favourite, Mrs. Waddlestone, to join the circle," said Frederica, peevishly.

"Certainly, if you wish it," observed Lord Launceston, gravely; and he moved eagerly towards the lady with the pearl pendants, who fanned herself in joyful agitation on his approach.

Frederica, apprehensive that her giddy brother might really execute his threat of introducing her to his friend, now whispered to Rawleigh her anxiety to leave the room; and after standing for a moment in the evergreen hall—at the door of a supper-room glittering with caramel baskets and pyramids of foil, and savouring horribly of ham sandwiches and negus,—Lady Rawleigh's carriage "stopped the way." She arrived in Bruton-street only half recovered from the shock of her astonishment and consternation.

CHAPTER VI.

A stately palace built of squared brick,
Which cunningly was without mortar laid;
Whose walls were high, but nothing strong or thick;
And golden foil all over them displayed,
That purest sky with brightness they dismayed.
High lifted up were many lofty towers,
And goodly galleries far over laid;
Full of fair windows and delightful bowers.

SPENSER.

THE following morning was devoted by Lady Rawleigh, according to a previous engagement, to a humdrum drive in the suburbs with Mrs. Martha Derenzy, her husband's favourite aunt. For two long hours, she had to listen to the rheumatic old lady's diffuse details of the domestic arrangements of her neighbours, a Mrs. Scott, a Miss Hunter, and a Mr. Wilson, persons who belonged to a sufficiently unpretending degree of life to be within reach of the attractions of her tea-table; and whom Frederica very sincerely wished had superseded her in the pleasures of the present airing. Her thoughts were naturally engrossed by the approaching introduction of a "Miss Waddlestone" into the house of Rawdon! At one moment, she resolved to exert her most anxious efforts for the prevention of such a catastrophe. At another, the interesting

figure of Leonora recurred to her recollection ; forcing her to admit, that not a single young person of her own rank in society rivalled the pretensions of the soap-boiler's lovely daughter.

She could not but reflect with some amusement on the needless pains which Lady Olivia Tadcaster had been giving herself, to intercept any possibility of a *tête-à-tête* between Lucy Elbany and Lord Launceston. For though the companion had judiciously declined the favour of accompanying her ladyship in her morning's tour of the bargain-shops, she had not been able to elude the vigilance with which the sister of her patroness thought proper to establish herself daily in Charles-street, during the hour devoted to Lady Launceston's siesta ; a crisis generally selected by the young lord for his visits of filial duty. Frederica was even cogitating over the necessity of acquainting her aunt with her brother's matrimonial views and engagements, when Mrs. Derenzy, suddenly pulling the check-string opposite the entrance-lodge of an immense house at Kensington Gore, put a period to her meditations.

A porter, covered with lace and aiguillettes, having answered the summons, Mrs. Derenzy tendered her visiting card, with the additional message of "her compliments—and she was sorry she could not get out, as she had a lady in the carriage." Away they drove again ; and Lady Rawleigh had not even the curiosity to inquire to whom the house belonged and the message was addressed ; when, in a few minutes, the carriage stopped suddenly.

"What is the matter," cried the old lady, in alarm. "Any thing wrong with the harness?" And she let down the window in a prodigious fluster, when a panting footman in a gorgeous livery, similar to that of the porter aforesaid, made his appearance sans hat, sans breath, sans manners. "Mrs. Waddlestone's best respects, ma'am, and she hopes you'll turn back, and 'll be very happy to see the lady."

"What shall we do, my dear Lady Rawleigh?"

"Waddlestone?" faltered Frederica ; "the soap-boiler?"

"I fancy Mr. W. is in some kind of business in the city. But their style of living at the West-end is quite superior. Nothing can equal the beauty of their gardens ; and if it would not be asking too great a favour of you, my dear niece, I should be glad of an opportunity to visit them this fine morning."

"By all means, then, let us turn back. But as a favour, in return, pray dear Madam, let me exact a promise of you not to *name* me to the family. I have motives for the request which I will explain hereafter."

"Certainly—certainly. But what can I call you?"

"Your niece ;—which will satisfy the curiosity of M—"

Waddlestone, touching a person in a shabby bonnet and last year's pelisse."

Lady Rawleigh rather congratulated herself on the opportunity of inspecting the domestic habits of a family, with which she was so soon likely to be connected; and when, on approaching the mansion, she perceived its long vista of conservatories, the marble stands of exotics gracing the lawn, and the swarm of domestics congregated at the hall-door, she was willing to admit that, if affluence were the object of her brother's matrimonial choice, he was decidedly fortunate in having passed the preceding summer at Cowes.

"Remember I" she whispered emphatically to Mrs. Derenzy, in assisting her up the vast flight of steps.

"I give you my word of honour not to mention your name," answered the old lady, conceiving that this whimsey on the part of her nephew's noble bride must originate in family pride.

Even Frederica, accustomed as she was to the dwellings of the great, felt startled by the profusion and selection of the objects of *virtù* which met her eye on every side. The staircase was modelled after one of Gandy's architectural designs; and the vestibule through which they passed into the drawing-room, was ornamented by fine copies of the Whetter and Dying Gladiator, and by an original Diana with a greyhound, from the chisel of Schadoff. The soap boiler was evidently a patron of the fine arts.

The saloon into which they were ushered, was one of those luxurious retreats which modern refinement delights to decorate with the triumphs of human genius, as well as the useful inventions of human industry. Opening into a conservatory in which tropical plants threw up their palmy leaves into a dome where the slender threads of a *jet d'eau* produced a succession of rainbows, hovering amid blossoms bright and evanescent as their own 'hues, it was crowded with cushioned ottomans and chairs at every angle of inclination suggested by the fancy of indolence. Jardinières, bright with flowers, were mingled with triangular perambulators filled with the last new works of the day; and though five pictures only graced the walls, they were *chef d'œuvres* from the hands of Claude, Hobbima, Ruysdael, Salvator Rosa, and Vandyke. On one side of the saloon stood a magnificent organ and harp, surrounded by a profusion of music; and near the fireplace, a cabinet of exquisite miniatures, which might have been adjudged as the works of Isaac Oliver or Petitot, had not a half-finished performance of similar merit appeared on a little ebony bureau beneath; accompanied by a palette and brushes, and the various implements of a fairer artist.

Frederica was startled from an examination of this beautiful collection, by the vociferous entrance of Mrs. Waddlestone; and she had just time to drop the thick Chantilly veil over her face, and hear herself casually announced by Mrs. Martha, as "my niece, from Warwickshire." She had not been deceived in anticipating that the Waddlestones would resolve a nameless niece, in a dress of Quaker-like simplicity, into a poor relation—a species of un-salaried Lucy Elbany; and she was consequently permitted to seat herself at a very satisfactory distance from her hostess.

"La ! Mrs. Derenzy, my dear ma'am, how *could* you hesitate about bringing your own niece to Waddlestone House ! Be assured I shall always feel particularly gratified in seeing any of your family *chez moi*."

" You are extremely polite—I am sorry that the state of my health does not more frequently permit me to make inquiries after yours and Miss Waddlestone's."

" Thank you my dear ma'am—thank you ; Leonora is as well as the dissipation of the season will allow—torn to pieces, Mrs. Derenzy, with the pleasing toils of the *grand monde*. Ah ! here she comes, poor dear, quite languid from the *fête* of last night. I assure you it was *le point du jour* before we reached Waddlestone House."

Leonora, dressed with the utmost simplicity, now made her appearance from the conservatory ; and after a graceful recognition of her mother's elderly guest, seated herself in a much more courteous vicinity to the anonymous niece, than Mrs. Waddlestone considered due either to her degree or her pelisse. Already, she had entered into a desultory conversation with the stranger, touching the state of the weather and its influence upon her flowers ; when the attention of both was arrested by the sound of Lord Launceston's name, uttered by Mrs. Waddlestone ; and neither of them found it possible to maintain a separate dialogue, while so interesting a topic was discussed within hearing.

" Yes, ma'am !—a more charming entertainment I think I never beheld. Mrs. Luttrell is a sweet woman. She has diamonds enough to form a moderate-sized chandelier ; and I must say she does them ample justice. One seldom sees her without them, except at church."

" She is a distant connexion of mine," said Mrs. Martha, eagerly. " But her hours and habits are too fashionable for *me*. I do not see much of her."

" Yes ! she is quite one of the *beau monde*. Excellent company at her house. We had Lady Williams, and Lady Thomas, and Lady Smith, and Lady Wilson, and a vast number of people fashion. We took our *protégé*, young Launceston, with us ; f

really can't abide that Leonora should dance with indiscriminate partners."

"*Lord Launceston?*" inquired Mrs. Derenzy.

"Yes, ma'am, his lordship is quite *l'enfant de la famille* at Waddlestone House," said the soap-boiler's lady, looking towards her daughter with her mouth drawn on one side, by way of innuendo. "We had Launceston's sister there, too—that little Lady Rawleigh. But I must own I didn't think much of her. As to Sir Brooke, he has more the air of an apprentice, than a man of fashion."

"My dear mamma," interrupted Leonora, distressed by her mother's superfluous severity, "surely it is impossible to be more elegant in address or appearance than Lady Rawleigh!"

"I don't know what you call an elegant dress," observed Mrs. Waddlestone. "But I got as near her as possible; and if hers was not Nottingham lace, I'm very much mistaken."

"She is so graceful and ladylike that I did not notice her *dress*," said Leonora.

"Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh are my very near relatives!" cried Mrs. Martha Derenzy, gasping with consternation, but not knowing how to terminate the ill-timed comments of her hostess.

"I am sure Mrs. Derenzy, my dear ma'am, I ask your pardon. But when one hears people cried up as Launceston is always crying up his sister, it inclines one to be a little severe."

"Brothers are apt to be partial judges," said the old lady, fidgeting on her seat.

"But Colonel Rhyse is not brother to Lady Rawleigh," observed Leonora. "And he has often assured me that she is a model of feminine gentleness."

"Oh! Colonel Rhyse makes it a point to swear to the truth of all Launceston's rhapsodies. However, I dare say we shall have ample means of judging. I dare say we shall have plenty of Lady Rawleigh's company before we die—eh, Leonora?" And again she distorted her mouth by a significant screw.

Affecting not to hear this coarse apostrophe, which in fact served to colour her face and throat with the deepest crimson, Leonora now turned towards her silent companion with some trivial observation respecting her drive; when Frederica, feeling that she was practising a somewhat unfair deception, inquired whether it would be taking too great a liberty to beg to accompany her through the celebrated gardens of Waddlestone House. Leonora, ever eager to give pleasure to others, and particularly anxious to divert the attention of the stranger from her mother's satires, instantly rose; and followed by Lady Rawleigh, moved towards the conservatory. But Mrs. Waddlestone, who had heard the petition, and considered

it somewhat encroaching on the part of Mrs. Derenzy's humble companion, called out after her daughter—"Now pray, my dearest Leo., don't go to overheat yourself! Put up your parasol, and put on your bonnet; for you know Launceston and his friend may drop in from minute to minute, and his lordship can't abide to see you scorching your eyes out by a *coup de soleil*."

Leonora promised compliance with these maternal injunctions; and in another minute, Frederica found herself alone with her future sister-in-law, in one of the prettiest flower-gardens which ever put forth its roses since those of Armida. She was delighted to perceive that the youthful heiress pointed out to her observation every plant and every rarity really deserving her attention, without the least parade or affectation; and as Leonora stood with her slight figure and silken curls, leaning against a marble vase, in the shadowy coolness of a trellised walk covered with flowering acacias, Lady Rawleigh was so captivated by her beauty, and so disposed in her favour by the defence she had uttered of her own, that she was half-tempted to claim her at once as a sister. Fortunately, the reminiscence of Mrs. Waddlestone was sufficiently strong upon her mind, to restrain her within the bounds of prudence.

"I could not have conceived," said Frederica, "that so secluded a spot existed within a morning's drive of Bond-street."

"Except for the visits of our London friends," replied Miss Waddlestone, "it forms quite a country house. I am much attached to this place. I often think that, small as this garden is, I could be content to limit my future existence within its walls."

"That notion," thought Lady Rawleigh, "must certainly originate from her *tête-à-tête* walks with Launceston in this very *bergeau!* But Mrs. Waddlestone has been telling us wonders of the dissipated life you lead," said she, aloud. "Surely you would not wish to resign the pleasures of your London season?"

"I would not renounce the society of my intimate friends. But I cannot say the attractions of our general acquaintance would often seduce me from my happy home. You know," said Leonora, blushing deeply, and shaking away the curls from her deep blue eyes with a smile of proud humility, "we are but *parvenus*; a fact which *here* I can easily forget; but which is incessantly recalled to me in a London ball-room, either by the want of refinement of our equals, or the contemptuous bearing of our superiors. That very Lady Rawleigh, of whom we were speaking just now, rushed from Mrs. Luttrell's party, last night, only to avoid an introduction to us—a fact which I mention to excuse the asperity with which she was mentioned by *mamma*—who has by nature the most indulgent disposition in the world. I should be sorry that a stranger judge"

either herself or the object of her strictures, from a few hasty words uttered in a moment of vexation."

"Believe me, I should not take the liberty"—Frederica began.

"Do not let us say another word on an unpleasant subject," said Leonora, rallying her spirits, which were evidently in a minor key, "while we have these beautiful camellias to look at. This delicate flower is the Lady Hume's blush;—what a pity that anything so lovely should be scentless!"

Lady Rawleigh, in momentary apprehension of her brother's arrival, and the annoying explanations which must ensue, hurried through the lofty greenhouses glowing with blossoms, on pretext of Mrs. Derenzy's impatience; and arrived in the drawing-room at the same moment with a tray, covered with splendid varieties of fruit. She had now the nervous perplexity of seeing her aunt attack a bunch of superb Frontignan grapes, which nothing short of ten minutes could suffice to demolish; and very earnestly did she long to take justice, and Mrs. Waddlestone's scissors of embossed gold into her own hands, and curtail the enjoyments of poor Mrs. Martha Derenzy. Dreading every moment to hear the doors thrown open, and her brother announced, she attempted to beguile the time by noticing the pictures decorating the apartment.

"They are indeed matchless," said Leonora, without any affectation of humility. "My father is considered an excellent judge of pictures; and in purchases, has the advantage of being advised by the most eminent artists of the day, many of whom are constant visitors here. We have little to do with men of fashion, or men of rank; but my dear father is highly esteemed by men of genius, of all conditions."

It was fortunate for Miss Waddlestone that her mother was uttering her parting civilities to Mrs. Derenzy when Leonora gave utterance to so plebeian a declaration. She bestowed a valedictory curtsey of most contemptuous brevity on the nameless and well-veiled niece, who hastily followed her guest from the saloon; and lo! just as their carriage passed the lodge, Frederica perceived her brother and Colonel Rhyse leisurely approaching. But the chariot of Mrs. Martha Derenzy was of far too gothic a build to attract their attention; and the remaining way from Kensington Gore to Bruton-street, was enlivened only by the old lady's exclamations concerning the coarse ill-nature of Mrs. Waddlestone,—the excellence of her grapes,—the beauty of her daughter;—and, above all, by her own regrets that Frederica should have exposed herself to a predicament so disagreeable.

"I see your motive, my dear niece. I understand your desire to form unembarrassed observations upon a family with whom you

may become more closely united. But I knew not whether most to lament the annoyance to which you have been exposed, or the unequal alliance projected by my Lord Launceston."

Lady Rawleigh, however, entertained no doubt as to the comparative magnitude of the evils, and dressed herself for the dinner in Charles-street, without having found time to communicate half her distresses to Sir Brooke, or make up her mind as to the extent of the intelligence due to her mother and aunt. Launceston, in his well-appointed but unostentatious bachelor equipage, having called for her before the ceremonies of the toilet were fully concluded, she desired he would proceed and send his carriage back for her, to avoid the inquiries of a *tête-à-tête*; and when his blood horses a second time skirted, within a hair's-breadth, the iron-railings of Berkeley-square, towards their destination, she could not but contrast their rate of speed with her morning's jog-trot with Mrs. Martha; and even with the sober pace at which Sir Brooke, with his heavy Rawleighford-bred bays, was proceeding towards Westminster and the Lexley consultation.

"And now," said Frederica, as she stopped at her mother's door, "now for the forward officiousness of Miss Lucy Elbany!—Little does she suspect how thoroughly her arts are thrown away upon my brother; or how differently he estimates the modest simplicity of the heiress of Waddlestone House, and the bold glaring displays of his mother's Companion."

CHAPTER VII.

Priuli is——a senator!
VENICE PRESERVED.

SIR BROOKE RAWLEIGH and Mr. Lexley were so unfortunate as to belong to different clubs; and the private residence of the latter was therefore selected as the scene of their negotiations. It is not to be supposed that the wholesale and retail dealer in Parliament could have fixed his domicile in any other parish than that of St. Margaret, Westminster; and Sir Brooke accordingly found himself driven to the entrance of a paved court—an old-fashioned cul-de-sac, whose heavy architraves of carved wood-work, narrow windows, and roofing of red tile, formed a melancholy memento of the domestic architecture in vogue during the early days of the Hanoverian succession. A peep into the Birdcage-walk, at the peril of dislocation, and the unceasing carillon of St. Margaret's chimes, formed the sole enlivenment of this dingy senatorial retreat.

A mysterious-looking, middle-aged man, with speckled stocking-

powdered hair, and a slight hint of a pig-tail,—who might have been indiscriminately taken for a butler, a clerk, or a secretary,—circumspectly ushered the expected guest into his master's study; with a whispered assurance that Mr. Lexley would shortly make his appearance, being probably detained at the House; and Sir Brooke, as he gazed around the uninviting chamber, could not but feel unwilling to adopt the habits of life of this active servant of the country, in assuming a similar weight of parliamentary responsibility. He examined the tall, dark, spider-legged mahogany writing-table, spotted with much ink, and indented with severe penmanship; the unsightly book-cases, filled with vellum-bound folios and buff-leather quartos—(*Reports*, from Vol. I. to Vol. ccxxviii.,)—and a ragged regiment of loose and unconnected pamphlets;—the chimney-piece graced with two dusty glass girandoles, and a museum of printed and wafered circulars, addressed by divers clerkly hands to “John Lexley, Esq., M.P.,” till his mind involuntarily reverted to his snug library at Rawleighford, so conducive to the utmost refinement of literary ease, and so musky with Russia leather;—its scattered memoranda collected under paper-weights of the choicest bronze, and its artificial light distributed by reading-lamps and shaded candles, such as might have assisted Methuselah or old Parr to decipher a diamond edition without spectacles.

After the miserable solitude of a quarter of an hour passed in a retreat presenting few extraneous attractions to divert the attention of its owner from the dry details to which he saw fit to devote his existence, a hurried rap announced Mr. Lexley's return; and having accosted his punctual guest with an incoherent explanation touching the lateness of the division, the harassed member alluded to the necessity of washing those hands (the cleanliness of which had been so much lauded by Sir Brooke to Frederica), and rushed up the creaking stairs, in his usual flurry of superfluous activity.

Rawleigh, who was now growing hungry and fractious, was right glad when at length he found himself seated opposite to his host at the dinner-table, with a tureen of very diaphanous mock-turtle, and a dish of flaccid salmon, smothered in horse-radish and surrounded by a few smelts of the consistency of cuttle-fish, standing between them. As soon as he had in some degree appeased his appetite with these uninviting provisions,—which Mr. Lexley announced to be “ bachelor's fare,” or “ pot luck,” or some other apologetic designation of a filthy dinner,—Sir Brooke, on casting his eyes around him, perceived that a well stored dumb-waiter was placed near his host, and another within his own reach; and that no sooner had the mysterious butler placed upon the board two

bottles of sherry, a saddle of rancid mutton, a hay-cock of mashed potatoes, and a tepid salad, than he withdrew from attendance ;— closing the door as charily after him as if either his master, or his master's guest, were labouring under a concussion of the brain. It was evident that he was familiarly trained to the business-like privacy of Mr. Lexley's confidential dinners.

"And now, my dear Sir, *we are alone!*" said Lexley, in an opening phrase ; twisting, as he spoke his long throat over his shoulder, like that of an ill-trussed ptarmigan, to ascertain that his cup-bearer had left the room. Unconsciously, the awe-struck baronet followed his scrutinizing glance ; and began to feel that there was something inexpressibly awful in all these mysterious preliminaries. Nothing was wanting but Miss Kelly, to render the scene a perfect melodrame !

It is to be hoped that the courteous reader has formed no expectation of hearing *what* Mr. Lexley thought fit to utter, when he found himself "*alone*" with his friend Sir Brooke and the two dumb-waiters. The mysteries of Isis are not more rigidly sacred in our sight than those occasionally transacted in the parish of St. Margaret ; and if the process which sufficed to render our estimable Rawleigh sole representative of the respectable borough of Martwich should ever chance to be betrayed to posterity, so indiscreet a revelation shall never be traced to our pages.

We prefer adjourning from Mr. Lexley's second course to the dinner in Charles-street.

Already predisposed against the claims and encroachments of Miss Elbany, Lady Rawleigh felt extremely indignant on entering her mother's crowded drawing-room, to observe Lord Launceston hanging over her chair ; and devoting to the Companion that species of distinguishing incense which he had no longer any right to offer, except upon the altar at Kensington Gore. If any excuse could be made for his levity, it might have been assuredly found in the surpassing loveliness of the object of his infidelity. Frederica, who had never before beheld her with the advantages of evening dress, was astonished by the symmetry of Lucy's commanding figure, and the graceful turn of her head and shoulders. But her attention was not long permitted to rest on details so captivating and so fraught with vexation to herself. Lady Olivia Tadcaster was now announced ; bearing upon one arm a steel-embroidered orange-coloured velvet reticule, emulating the dimensions of a carpet-bag ; and upon the other, an elegant looking little woman, rather over-dressed, whom she eagerly presented to the attentions of her niece, as her friend, Mrs. Woodington.

Lady Rawleigh instantly recognised, in the sparkling miniature

before her,—in which a few of the defeatures of time were varnished over by the hand of a skilful artist,—a very rich widow who had long been the object of Lady Olivia's matrimonial manœuvres in favour of her nephew; and Frederica could not help regretting, as she gazed upon the elaboration of Mrs. Woodington's toilet,—the curl of her feathers,—the profusion of her trinkets,—and the intricate plaiting of her sleeves,—that so much labour was lavished on an ingrate. It was a matter of little surprise to her that Lord Launceston should prefer the graceful and girlish simplicity of his Leonora to the artificial brilliancy of the showy little widow of Woodington Park; notoriously on the look out for an exchange between a poor coronet and her liberal jointure. But she felt that her brother would have been far more becomingly employed in doing the honours of his mother's house to his mother's guests, than in listening entranced to the “persuasive words and more persuasive sighs” of Miss Lucy Elbany.

Her own attention, however, was soon monopolized by the assiduities of Sir Robert Morse; who appeared as much delighted to welcome Lady Rawleigh back to her former haunts, as if he had never aspired to the smiles of Miss Rawdon;—as anxious to assume the tone of the favoured friend, as if he had never found himself a disappointed suitor. Lord Launceston was compelled to do the honours of the table to an old card-playing Countess Ronthorst, and an ancient Lady Lavinia Lisle (a spinster, whose matrimonial engagements had been ruptured by the loss of her lover in the first American war); his glances straying ever and anon towards the fine contour of Lucy Elbany's head;—while Colonel Rhyse, who would willingly have profited by his position on the left of the Companion to divert himself with the liveliness of her sallies, and the exquisite art with which she contrived to call forth and illustrate the absurdities of her neighbour Sir Mark Milman, found himself obliged to listen to the underbred, officious nothings of little Mrs. Woodington, bestowed upon him solely in honour of his Pyladeship with their noble host. The grimacing widow was far too accurately aware of the value of herself and her jointure, to dream of throwing away her attentions, on any other grounds upon a mere Colonel in the Guards, fourth son to a paltry Irish earl, the list of whose offspring occupied a whole page in the peerage.

The only person of the party posted to her entire satisfaction, was poor Lady Launceston; who enjoyed the consciousness of a large Japan screen between herself and the windows, a chauffrette at her feet, and a fat comfortable old dowager-lord on each side, ready to talk to her of the last news of the last century, in tones which would not have drowned the morning hymn of a humble

bee. Unless with Dr. Jenner on her right hand, and Sir Henry Halford or her quotidian apothecary, on her left, she could not have eaten her boiled chicken, and sipped her toast and water in a more gratifying neighbourhood; while the prominent, dictatorial Lady Olivia, like a personification of the imperative mood, was very aptly stationed between the preterpluperfect politeness of the obsolete Lord Twadell, and the subjunctive appendix of Mr. Broughley's modern enlightenment.

Mr. Broughley was a learned pundit and travelled man;—had seen not only “the Louvre” (which he appeared to consider as cockneyfied a monument as Aldgate pump) but the domes of Mecca, and the senate house of Washington;—had assisted at a storthing at Drontheim—a diet at Pesth;—palavered with the dogribbed Indians,—and sat face to face with the mummy of Möops, by the light of one of Davy's safety-lamps, in the Great Pyramid. This active member—not of society—but of all the societies of modern Europe, was one of the few persons to whom Lady Olivia Tadcaster bowed submissive, as pre-eminent above her omnimotive self.

She had originally made his acquaintance in shooting the falls of the Lahn, on her return from the Taunus mountains, where she had been passing the summer, to drink Seltzer water fresh from the rock; and had since intersected his orbit upon her travels, once in the cabinet of the Japanese palace at Dresden, and once in that of the celebrated restaurateur where the legs of geese are candied in sugar—at Toulouse. He was now recently returned from an Italian tour; and it was astonishing how many dear old friends—Romagnese Princes, Signori Abbati, learned librarians, Arcadian academicians, blue professors, purple eminences, ruined temples, ruined roués, captains of banditti, and captains of the papal guard, she found occasion to render the objects of her inquiries. Like the French marquis, who exclaimed with affectionate recognition, in some royal library, “*Ah! mon cher Cicéron!—c'est le même que Marc-Tulle!*”—her ladyship inquired how the poor dear old Coliseum had stood the winter; and whether the Palazzo Aldobrandini was likely to get rid of its *mal'aria*?

“ Is there any truth, Milman,” inquired Sir Robert Morse of Sir Mark, in the pause of his devotion to Lady Rawleigh, “ in the report that Rousford gives up the hounds? ”

“ Mere ill-nature, Sir—mere ill-nature.”

“ But they say his health will not allow him to stand another season.”

“ Scandal, Sir Robert, scandal! One of the idle reports of the day.”

"I trust it may be so; but I can perceive nothing calumnious in saying that Mr. Rousford is consumptive."

"What business has the public with any man's health?—What right have people to feel Mr. Rousford's pulse?—I say, Sir, that all domestic privacy is over in this country. No individual can put on his nightcap and die in peace, but his last moments are to be discussed, and his medicaments canvassed just as if he was public property. It is an outrage to the liberty of the subject that we can neither share our roast-mutton with a friend, nor have a headache when it suits us, but our motives for the measure, Sir, are to be talked about, and written about, and falsified for nefarious purposes. Half the mischief of modern society is done by this sort of invasion of private life, and idle discussion of our affairs."

"Because you see," said Sir Robert, who—never listening to long sentences of any description, and perceiving that Sir Mark had set in for a prose, had wisely occupied the interval with a glass of hock, and with the task of helping himself to a second cutlet, "if Rousford has *really* made up his mind to resign the hounds, he owes it to the county to give us a fair chance for the new appointment. The election cannot be decided in a day."

Lady Rawleigh, whose notions of electioneering, were just then confined to the vacancy at Martwich and the pretensions of Sir Brooke, somewhat startled her neighbour by inquiring whether he had any influence in that quarter; but while Sir Robert Morse, who considered the interests of the chase as sacred as Sir Mark Milman appeared to regard the catarrhs and tea and toast of private life, was attempting to explain to her that *he* was an old Meltonian,—incapable of seceding from his party, even to be Premier of the Quorn or Pytchley, her ear was struck by the name of her cousin Lady Mary Trevelyan, uttered in the dry nasal twang of Mr. Broughley.

"Then you did not see my niece during your stay at Rome?" Lady Olivia was inquiring.

"Lord Trevelyan was at his villa Vico-Varo during the whole period of my visit; and your ladyship will admit that the attractions of the Eternal City do not allow so much force to the claims of friendship, as will sanction the sacrifice of a morning to a country visit."

"A morning?—A mere three hours' drive!—I recollect the first time I visited Horace's villa, I took the *Archigymnasium della Sapienza* on my way; and ran through the gallery of the Palazzo Ruspoli on my return."

"Persons of inquiring minds," said Broughley, with the downcast lids of 'pride which apes humility,' "cannot allow themselves

to be deluded with cursory impressions as may content the superficial investigations of the female, the sciolist, and the tyro."

Now there was nothing so revolting to the feelings of Lady Olivia Tadcaster as to be termed, even inferentially, "*a female*,"—a name she estimated as only worthy to designate a dairy-maid, a milliner's apprentice, or the gentle sex of the cynocephalous species. She was willing at all times to take her stand in any list, for the equality of the sexes and prerogative of the petticoat; which she considered disparaged by such contemptuous mention. On the present occasion, her ladyship contented herself with a retort *un-courteous*.

"Well, I must own I wish you *had* extended your superficial observations to the beauty of my niece. Though Lady Mary Trevelyan may not make so imposing a head for one of the chapters of your tour as some pipkin from Pompeii, or gridiron from Girengenti, yet the attractions of her own are described as worthy the notice of all eyes less erudite than those of an F.A.S. One of the *Trecentisti* has written three hundred and sixty-five sonnets in her honour; and Ranzikoff, Thorwaldsen's favourite scholar, took a model of her countenance for that of the mother of the Maccabees, in his celebrated group."

"Indeed! Have I your ladyship's permission to record those circumstances in my Essay upon the 'Progress of Art in Modern Rome'? I am under an engagement to offer copies to the Pope, and several *Illustrissimi*; and am anxious that no important local anecdote should be omitted."

"I will write and ask my brother's leave. Prince Culminato sets off for Naples next week, and will think himself fortunate to be made the bearer of a letter, which may serve as his credentials to Vico-Varo."

"Under your ladyship's correction," said the Universal Traveller, "I fear that such a mission would prove a severe disappointment to our young friend, Prince Culminato. The other day, on my return through Munich, I perceived Lord Trevelyan's courier at the gate of the Schwarz Adler. I understood his lordship to be on a visit at Tegernsee."

"Very strange!—Very extraordinary!" cried Lady Olivia, pushing away an untouched plate of ice. "Lady Launceston, my dear, when did you hear from Trevelyan? Mr. Broughley persists that he saw him the other day in Bavaria. As if it were a possible thing for my brother to breathe on the wrong side of the Alps!"

"You are but imperfectly aware, my dear sister, of the advantage Trevelyan has derived from that little prescription of Sir Antony's which I forwarded to him last year. Indeed I have very little

doubt that if he would consent to confine himself to the regimen of biscuit-powder and goat's whey, he might get through a winter at Trevelyan Castle without much difficulty."

"Between ourselves, the only reason his health is so much better in Italy," murmured Lady Olivia to Broughley, "is from being beyond the reach of my sister Launceston's nostrums. But what was the date of your last letter, Sophy?"

"I declare I have forgotten!—I think it must have been Parma; for I remember feeling very apprehensive he might be tempted to try that odious indigestive cheese. And I know I received it somewhere about March; for it was at the time my eyes were suffering their annual agonies from the east wind. Miss Elbany, my dear, when *did* I hear last from my brother Trevelyan?"

"I read you a letter from his lordship soon after my arrival, and I have been with your ladyship six weeks," answered the companion, who instantly returned to her discourse with Sir Mark Milman; while Frederica mentally echoed—"Six weeks?—*Only* six weeks? And mamma already calls her 'my dear'!—Reading all the family correspondence, too—including, no doubt, mine and my brother's. I shall certainly write and give my cousin Mary a hint."

"A very singular person, that Lady Mary Trevelyan!" said Mrs. Woodington, mincingly, but loud enough to be heard by Lord Launceston; who, as she was aware, had been united in his childhood, by a sort of tacit betrothment, to his wealthy cousin.

"Indeed!" cried his lordship, obedient to the spur. "In what way?—is she blue—or pink—or evangelical? A flirt, a saint, or a *précieuse*?"

"Every thing by turns, and nothing long," said Broughley, pedantically.

"We will not be so severe as to pronounce her either saint or flirt," said Mrs. Woodington, charmed to have attracted his lordship's attention to her own radiant little person. "But when I was at Rome, two winters ago, nothing was talked of but the feats of Lady Mary Trevelyan;—her exploring expeditions in Apulia, where the whole party remained on horseback from sunrise to sunset;—and her cruises in her own yacht among the Greek islands."

"I conclude my cousin is fond of riding and sailing,—no uncommon taste!" said Frederica, dryly.

"Oh! certainly," said Mrs. Woodington, in a deprecating tone, "certainly!—I am far from wishing to cast any imputation on Lady Mary. Only it *was* considered to argue very unusual *courage*—on the part of a young and beautiful woman, to defend

her father, pistol in hand, when they were surrounded by banditti among the ruins of Pæstum ; and to command the manœuvres of her yacht when they were chased by an Algerine at Lepanto."

"Admirable courage, indeed!" said Frederica, warming in defence of her cousin. "Courage, both moral and physical."

"What a horrid Amazon," observed Miss Elbany, sneeringly, to Colonel Rhyse ; "worse than the maid of Saragossa."

"A pretty prospect for poor Launceston!" answered the Colonel, in the same confidential undertone. "When he breaks off his engagement with this ferocious beauty (as he certainly will), she will probably tell him to name his place and weapons, and bring him to book for his desertion."

"But do you think Lord Launceston *will* break off the engagement?" said the artful Companion, while a glance of triumph irradiated her large dark eyes.

"That *depends!*" observed Colonel Rhyse, in a voice both lower and more significant ;—so significant, indeed, that it brought a deep blush to the cheeks of the designing Miss Elbany.

"There certainly were many strange stories concerning Lady Mary Trevelyan floating in society at Rome, last winter," observed Broughley, with a tone of authentication.

"Lies,—I will answer for it!" cried Sir Mark Milman. "All the stories which *float* in society are lies; scum always rises to the surface."

"As for instance," continued the Traveller, without noticing the indignant vehemence of the worthy country gentleman opposite, "the epigrams which made their appearance last year, in the hands of Pasquin and Marforio, were traced by their witty causticity to the invention of Lord Trevelyan's daughter. It was even surmised that his holiness had seen fit to speak to the Hanoverian ambassador on the subject."

"Lies, again!" said Sir Mark, angrily. "The pope knows better than to provoke the British parliament by an insult offered to a British peer, through the means of such a piece of gilt gingerbread as a Hanoverian resident. The epigrams were doubtless the production of some notary's clerk of the apostolic chamber."

"I can assure you, Sir Mark, that suspicion pointed very decidedly at Lady Mary."

"Suspicion, Sir, is a dirty cur, and makes many a false point."

"The position of my cousin Mary," said Frederica, with feeling and spirit, "is one which ought to render the world very indulgent towards her. She lost her mother during her infancy; and has ever since been the spoiled child and constant companion of a father who is not only a decided humourist, but sufficiently independ-

to gratify all her whims and fancies, and his own. Lady Mary is young, beautiful, brilliantly accomplished, flattered, followed,—and laughed at."

"Oh! pardon me! Lady Rawleigh, not *laughed at!*" said Mrs. Woodington.

"Wept over, then, by the hypocritical!"

"My dear Fred., you are quite eloquent!" cried Lord Launceston, greatly amused by her vehement defence of a cousin whom she had not seen for fifteen years. "You appear inclined to fight under Mary Trevelyan's banners."

"I should have no fear of enlisting, from anything I have yet heard concerning her. I know my cousin, from good authority, to be a fine generous creature, incapable of a bad action; and if a little headstrong, and ignorant or coateemptuous of the usages of the world, I have no doubt she will find abundance of friends eager to forgive such sins, in favour of ten thousand a-year, and the handsomest face in Europe."

"Hear, hear!" cried Lord Launceston, secretly nettled at the ardour with which his sister embraced the cause of a relative, to whom he was conscious of having behaved unhandsomely. Even before his acquaintance with Leonora, his lordship had secretly decided against the fulfilment of an engagement formed by his parents in his infancy without his concurrence; and his projected marriage with Miss Waddlestone now appeared to render an explanation of his intentions more peremptory than ever.

"It is a melancholy thing," said the Countess Routhurst, dropping little dice of pine-apple into a glass of old Madeira, "when young women of Lady Mary's rank in life forget what is due to themselves and their families; don't you think so, Lord Launceston?"

"Perhaps," observed Lady Lavinia Lisle, in a querimonious voice, "perhaps this misguided young creature may be suffering from some disappointment of the affections; don't you think so, Lord Launceston?" And without being at all aware of the origin of the confusion now visible in his countenance, she cast a look of timid sensibility on her own skinny forefinger; saddled a lozenge-shaped ring the size of a tombstone, behind whose glass was braided a lock of hair from the military queue of the martyred hero of the American war, with a flourishing E. B. in diamond sparks; forming the obituary record of Captain Edward Boddingbury—the beloved victim of Bunker's Hill!

"Let us change the conversation," whispered Frederica to her neighbour, Sir Robert Morse; "the character of poor Lady Mary has been quite sufficiently anatomized."

Now, Sir Robert possessed only one intellectual treasury on which

he could draw at sight—the stables. He was one of that numerous class of well-educated Englishmen who devote their whole existence to an inferior animal; and though too gentlemanly in his habits to emulate the jargon and costume by which certain noble youths assimilate themselves with their own jockeys, a horse was at all times the thing uppermost in his thoughts.

"You don't ride this year, Lady Rawleigh?" said he, on the spur of the moment. "I have not seen you in the park once this season."

"I left my horse in Warwickshire, and Sir Brooke has not one that would carry a lady."

"Have you nothing fit for Lady Rawleigh?" inquired Sir Robert, of Lord Launceston.

"I am sorry to say I have nothing fit for any one. My stud is at a miserably low ebb," said his lordship. "I sold off every thing last summer, except my hunters. But Fred., why did you not bring up your own mare? She suits you perfectly."

"Yes! and she suited you so perfectly to go to cover when you were at Rawleighford, that old John would not hear of my bringing her to town. Poor Jessy has been turned out to recruit."

"What have you done with that half-bred Arabian which Lady Rawleigh used sometimes to ride before her marriage?" persisted Sir Robert to his friend. *That was the most complete thing for a lady I ever saw.*"

"I wish I had never parted with him," said Lord Launceston. "He went one black morning, in the general turn out, to Tattersall's. By the way, Mrs. Woodington, I think I saw you riding Mameluke the other morning?"

"It was lent me by my friend, Admiral Manningtree," replied the widow, delighted to be noticed by Lord Launceston, even on account of her horse. "He wishes to part with it, as being too slight to carry *his* weight; and I shall be only too happy to waive my claims in favour of Lady Rawleigh, should you wish to make the purchase."

"How say you, Frederica. If I buy Mameluke, will you ride him again?"

"Certainly not; he would be a very useless horse to you: and you are not well provided for yourself, just now."

"Well, then, since you are so punctilious, shall I recommend him to Rawleigh?"

"Still less! Sir Brooke purchased Jessy for me only last autumn."

"One would think that matrimony had caused a total revolution in your tastes," observed Sir Robert Morse. "So fond as you always were of riding!"

"Fred. used to be as determined a centauress as Lady Mary Trevelyan," observed her brother. "And I really never saw the ride so full as it is this year;—the only place for meeting everybody."

"Who are those handsome girls on white ponies with whom I met Sir Brooke Rawleigh yesterday morning?" inquired Sir Mark Milman of Frederica.

"I really do not know—I have not been in the park this year."

"By Jove, I do believe Rawleigh was cunning enough to put that whim about Jessy into old John's head," said Lord Launceston, laughing, "in order that he may keep the park to himself. For positively she was not out with me half-a-dozen times, and is strong enough for twice my weight."

"Then by all means evade being a dupe, by countermining the plot," whispered Sir Robert to Frederica. "Give your sanction to Launceston to make Mameluke his own again. Believe me, nothing avails to counterbalance the injurious effect of a London life like a good canter."

"Or if you are too proud to ride your brother's horse, my dear niece," said Lady Olivia Tadcaster, delighted at the notion of a negotiation of any kind, "what can you do better with that little bag of sovereigns I found yesterday morning on your dressing-table, than indulge in a favourite recreation?"

Now this little bag of sovereigns happened to contain the destined price of the marble fountain, which was yet incomplete; but Frederica knew she had three hundred pounds of her pin-money lying untouched in the hands of Mr. Ruggs, of which only one was bespoken for the Opera; and began to reflect that it would be impossible to appropriate it more to her satisfaction than to the purchase of her favourite horse. Besides, she had very little doubt that the handsome girls on the white ponies were the Mapleberry's, under the chaperonage of Lady Lotus.

"What did Admiral Manningtree ask?" inquired Lady Olivia of her friend.

"A hundred guineas."

"And I originally bought him for two hundred and fifty!" exclaimed Lord Launceston.

"I suspect," said the managing little Mrs. Woodington, who, with all her finery, was not superior to the feminine spirit of a bargain, "I suspect the Admiral would be glad to part with him for eighty. It is his daughter's favourite horse; and as she is going abroad to die at Nice, and can have no further occasion for it, it will only be an incumbrance to the Admiral. I dare say he will let it go cheap."

"Poor Miss Manningtree!" sighed Lady Lavinia Lisle. "She

has never got over that disappointment about Lord Putney. She is in a deep decline."

"Unless she has infected Mameluke, *that* is not *our* affair," said Sir Robert Morse, as the ladies rose to leave the dining-room, and he had the happiness of diving under the table for Lady Rawleigh's handkerchief. "Well! does your ladyship authorize Launceston to make the purchase?"

"Inquire about it for me," said Frederica to her brother, whose attention was riveted on the figure of Lucy Elbany drawing on her gloves.

"I will let you know to-morrow," was his vague reply, as his sister turned into the hall.

CHAPTER VIII.

Thereby so fearlesse and so fell he grew,
That his own wyfe and mistress of his guise
Did often tremble at his horrid view.

SPENSER.

WHEN Frederica returned to Bruton-street, where she found her husband extended upon the sofa in all the martyrdom of indigestion proceeding from the crudities of Mr. Lexley's feast, she had so much to relate touching the diverting little artifices of Mrs. Woodington, and the blindness of her mother to Miss Elbany's designs on the thoughtless Launceston, that her own upon Admiral Manningtree's stables were quite forgotten. She had to complain that, with a very slight preface of apology to herself, her brother had insisted on sending to Bruton-street for her harp, in order that the Companion might indulge her own vanity and his lordship's request, by an exhibition of her musical talents.

"I wish Martin had mentioned it to me when I came in," said Sir Brooke, starting from his recumbent position.

"Oh! all interference would then have been useless; Miss Lucy had given us half-a dozen concertos before eleven o'clock."

"Of course. But if I had known there was to be music, I would have put my hat on again, and looked in at your mother's. Conceiving there would be nothing better than Lady Olivia and the whist-table, I laid myself down here and went to sleep, till I heard the carriage stop."

"Your wife and the rest of the party in Charles-street are much obliged to you."

"And how does Miss Elbany play? Like a country miss, I suppose, with more vehemence than measure! But she must make a splendid figure at the harp?"

"Very much like that colossal statue of Melpomene, whose head used to reach the rafters in the King's-mews! But I *must* do her the justice to say that I never heard a more accomplished musician, nor beheld such complete mastery of the instrument combined with so much exquisite musical feeling. The whole thing was perfection."

"Do let your harp remain in Charles-street, Frederica! I should like of all things to hear her," said Sir Brooke, deceived by the candour of his wife into forgetting her little previous pique against her mother's companion. "Whenever you want to practise it will be just as easy for you to play there, as at home. It will remind you of old times."

"I have not the least desire to expose my incapacity; by contrasting my performances with those of Miss Elbany, who was doubtless educated for a public performer. But I certainly would comply with your request in that lady's favour, were I not alive to the danger of increasing her attractions in my brother's eyes."

"What can be the harm of making his mornings in Charles-street pass a little more agreeably? Now *you* are gone, he must find his visits to his mother hang very heavy on his hands."

"Perhaps so. But I have reason to believe that William is under an engagement in another quarter, which renders his attentions to Miss Elbany rather offensive than perilous to himself. In short, his conduct towards her argues a degree of heartless levity, which ought to find some more becoming spot for its indulgence than my mother's roof."

"My pretty little moralist,—my dear magnanimous reformer!" cried Sir Brooke, in a tone of gaiety which betrayed the lingering effects of the second bottle of Mr. Lexley's fiery sherry, "you shall have it exactly as you please! You shall send back the carriage for the harp this very moment, if it suit you; and as soon as I am in the House, you shall write me an oratorical burst of indignation respecting military punishments, or the slave trade.—These little severities sit so becomingly on your lips!"

But on the morrow, it became the turn of Rawleigh to play the censor. Before Frederica had finished her coffee, Sir Brooke quitted the breakfast-table to communicate, in a lengthy epistle to his factotum, the approaching change in his situation; trusting that the prospect of receiving his future letters post-free, might blind that narrow calculator to the painful necessity of booking up to an immediate and considerable amount. But just as he had entangled himself in the middle of a very long and conclusive sentence, having as many limbs as Briareus, which the baronet was vainly attempting to fetter by the manacle of a full stop,—the sound of another

species of full stop in the street below startled him from the writing-table. Looking from the window, he perceived Lord Launceston resigning the rein of a showy Arabian horse, from which he had just dismounted, to a footman holding a breakfast napkin in his hand; and while his brother-in-law flew up stairs, Sir Brooke was chafing with all the irritation of equestrian sympathy, on beholding Mr. Thomas jerking the snaffle in its delicate mouth as if he were handling a jack-chain.

"My dear fellow!" cried he, as Lord Launceston burst into the room, "what can tempt you to confide that fine horse to a man—"

"Who passes his days in caning a clothes-horse? Because it is not *mine*. Mameluke is the property of your lady wife;—so away with your eggshells, Fred, and write me draft for eighty pounds upon your Mr. Ruggs or Muggs, or whatever his name may be, in favour of Admiral Manningtree. I have not a moment. Make haste—I must ride him round to your stables, or we shall have Thomas putting his head in the dry-toast rack."

"What is all this?" said Sir Brooke, as Frederica calmly took his Bramah pen from his hands to comply with her brother's invitation. "You surely do not mean that Lady Rawleigh has bought that horse?"

"No. I bought him,—but Fred. pays for him. She was afflicted with a fit of heroism last night; and by way of acquainting the party in Charles-street with the disordered state of my finances, refused me the pleasure of purchasing Mameluke, on my own account, for her service."

"Why should you encumber yourself with a horse which must be perfectly useless to you?" said Frederica; proceeding to write her order on Mr. Ruggs, without any suspicion of her husband's surprise and vexation at a measure which he conceived to have been purposely effected without his knowledge.

"By Heaven!—I have just found it out!" cried Lord Launceston, flourishing his whip in a manner extremely perilous to the tables of Dresden china scattered about the room. "You prevented me from making Mameluke my own, fearing I might sometimes lend him to Miss Elbany, and drive the whole park demented by the sight of her splendid figure in a habit! For shame, Fred., for shame. How did you know that I was not anxious to make the purchase for the sake of my own Leonora?"

"I was anxious only to prevent your throwing away money for my sake," replied his sister, quietly tendering him the cheque. "And now go and settle with the Admiral, and place poor dear Mameluke under the care of Rawleigh's groom. I wonder w^t John will say to him?"

"That is more," thought Sir Brooke, "than she appears to have wondered concerning her husband; who is, however, somewhat more interested in the affair."

"Why should you not ride *to-day?*" said Lord Launceston returning from the door, and eager to conduce to his sister's amusement.

"*Shall we ride to-day, Rawleigh?*" said Frederica, "it promises to be very fine."

"I shall be engaged with Mr. Lexley all the afternoon," replied Sir Brooke, coldly.

"Then I will take care of you," cried her brother,—"provided you do not share in the taste of the Miss Mapleberrys for galloping about the park. I shall be back from Kensington Gore by four o'clock; shall I tell John to bring Mameluke round at that hour?"

"Pray do!" said Lady Rawleigh, "I shall be glad to assure myself by experience, that he has lost nothing of his paces in poor Miss Manningtree's possession."

Lord Launceston was off in a minute; and Frederica, perceiving that her husband had eagerly returned to his writing, forbore to interrupt him by her explanations; but took up "*The Undying One,*" from the sofa, and ran over the following lines—

To look upon the fairy one who stands
Before you with her young hair's shining bands,
And rosy lips half parted; and to muse
Not on the features which you now peruse,
Not on the blushing bride, but look beyond
Unto the angel wife—nor feel less fond;—
To keep thee but to one—and let that one
Be to thy home what warmth is to the sun;
And fondly, firmly, cling to her, nor fear
• The fading touch of each declining year;
This is true love—when it hath found a rest
In the deep home of manhood's faithful breast.

In this task, she was interrupted by the audible energy of Sir Brooke's penmanship! It appeared to her ears that he was unlucky in sputtering and splitting pens more frequently than she had ever found herself in all her experience. But it never occurred to her that he was in a passion. In about a quarter of an hour, however, he jumped up and rang the bell for a candle to seal his letter. Now there are few better criterions of the state of a man's temper, than his mode of ringing the bell, particularly in a ready furnished house, where they are seldom hung on scientific principles.

Frederica, aware of the delinquencies of the bell-wire, and consequently unsuspicious of her own share in the peal which now rattled in her ears, thought it but an act of justice to Thomas, the 'l-rope, and her husband, to remind him that he would find a

taper and match-box on her writing-table ; and Sir Brooke, who was firmly persuaded that his irritation had not escaped her attention, regarded this species of reproof only as an aggravation of her offence. He was obliged, however, to profit by the suggestion, and inform Thomas, on his panting arrival, that "nothing was wanted;" and while the footman retreated, congratulating himself that the house was not on fire, or his lady in a fainting fit, a match whizzed in the or-molu vase, the pungent fumes of the phosphorus tingled the nose of the unlucky Rawleigh, and the little taper started into light.

A still more perplexing trial awaits an angry man in sealing a letter. Absent and tremulous, he is sure to burn his fingers ; and this is exactly what chanced to Sir Brooke. The pain was exquisite, and elicited so vivacious an apostrophe to the sealing-wax, that Frederica laid down her book with amazement.

"My dear Rawleigh, have you burnt yourself?" she inquired with startled solicitude.

The reply of Sir Brooke need not be recorded ; it was comprehended in that very reprehensible adverb which is reported by Lord Byron to have been the cause of his first conjugal quarrel, as a reply to her ladyship's inquiry—(probably at some moment equally propitious with that of poor Frederica)—"whether she bored him?" Lady Rawleigh, if less implacably offended, was deeply hurt by so harsh a breach of respect towards herself. But concluding that her husband would apologize when the smart abated, she uttered not a syllable of remonstrance.

It is rather surprising that, being herself endued with that slight touch of jealousy which is inseparable from a quick sensibility, Lady Rawleigh should have remained blind to the existence of a similar feeling on the part of her husband. No man could be more purely and affectionately devoted to a woman—to a *wife*—than Sir Brooke to herself. But, unfortunately, he had passed half-a-dozen seasons in London prior to his marriage, where the adventures in which he beheld certain of his young companions engaged, and which had more than once tempted his own steadiness of moral character somewhat out of the perpendicular, perplexed him with a painful conviction of the levity of womankind ; which was, in fact, the origin of his deliberation in tendering his proposals to Miss Rawdon. He had perfect confidence in Frederica. He knew Lady Launceston to be a very worthy woman, who had educated her daughter in the strict principles of the old school ; but he did not feel himself less imperatively bound to preserve the flower thus delicately reared and nurtured, from the pollutions of the world. In uniting himself with the fair and gentle Frederica Rawdon, he ha-

uttered a secret vow to secure his wife, as far as the conventions of society would admit, from the profanation of libertine approach, and the contagion of frivolous companionship.

It was this strictness of principle which, in the first instance, suggested his objections against pin money, as a pernicious ministrant to feminine independence ; and which originated his disinclination for the opera-box,—where she must be exposed to the contact of all Mrs. William Erskyne's train of admirers,—nay ! perhaps of her own. He knew that she was too lovely not to be courted and followed; and feared she was too guilelessly unsuspecting, not to give unintentional encouragement to this species of adulation.

But above all, his desire to retain the beauty of his bride for his own adoration, and her society for his own enjoyment, had been the sole cause of Jessy's condemnation to an idle spring, in the Rawleighford meadows. Sir Brooke was fully aware that of all the opportunities afforded to flirtation, a side-saddle is the most propitious ; that in the hilarity of the open air, the approach to familiarity is dangerously easy ; that a thousand things are said, and heard, and smiled at, in the publicity of a morning ride, which would be resented in the domestic privacy of home ; and, recalling to mind the extreme passion of almost every giddy woman of his acquaintance for exhibiting herself on horseback in London, he judged it prudent to give a hint to the old groom.

Now, though satisfied that this hint had never reached his wife, he could not help persuading himself that Frederica was—or at least should or might have been—suspicious of his peculiar views on the subject ; and he was of opinion that the submissive acquiescence with which she received his sentence on her favourite mare, had arisen from a pre-determination to avail herself of the facilities afforded by her pin-money to add artifice to defiance, and secure her daily exhibition in the park. He conceived himself to have been ungenerously used, both by Lord Launceston and his sister ; and this second offence of her financial independence excited such a tumult of vexation in his heart, that the corrosion of the burning sealing-wax applied to his little finger, was by no means necessary to torture from his lips the unbecoming adverb already implied.

Lady Rawleigh, meanwhile, was unconscious of the train leading to the mine which had thus abruptly exploded ; and the major and minor of his provocations having been unuttered, the conclusion assumed a most inexplicable tone of violence. She had as little suspicion that Rawleigh was jealous, as that she was jealous herself, and till his disorder should assume the form of nervous headaches, there appeared no probability that her mind would become enlightened. Even when—the monumental blister of his burn

having duly made its appearance, and given the sealing-wax and his anger ample leisure to cool—he deliberately stalked out of the room with Ruggs's letter in his hand—even when, after a rattling in the stick and umbrella stand in the hall, she heard the street door slammed, manifestly without the intervention of her well-trained and well-practised domestics,—she never for a moment conjectured that herself or her doings had any share in the unwonted distemperature of mood which tempted Sir Brooke, for the first time since her marriage, to quit the house without bidding her good-bye!

"How I hate him to have any intercourse with that pragmatalist Ruggs!" murmured Frederica, patiently resuming her volume. "Men are always out of sorts after a communication with their bailiff, or an investigation of their banker's book. And then he is so much interested and occupied with this negotiation with Mr. Lexley; and should it succeed, his time will be so wretchedly engrossed by his parliamentary duties! Ah! I foresee I shall not have half so pleasant a spring as I expected;—for that impertinent companion in Charles-street will prevent me from consoling myself by passing the time of his absence with mamma! I dare say Rawleigh is only gone to his club, and did not think it necessary to take leave of me for that half-hour. But then, surely he said something of passing the day with Mr. Lexley? So that perhaps he may go round to the stables for his horse, after he has read the newspapers, without coming home at all.—How very provoking! All the pleasure of my first ride will be lost, unless I see dear Rawleigh for a minute or two before we set off."

It may be observed, on occasions of disagreement in wedded life, that where a quarrel has not exactly declared itself, or a state of hostility sent forth its gauntlet of defiance, a species of uneasy consciousness forewarns the pacific party that something is wrong. Like the inhabitants of a volcanic region, they hear strange noises in the air, and mysterious sounds in the earth, unnoticed by every casual passenger, but prophetic of an eruption.

Between the breakfast hour, accordingly, and that appointed for her ride, Lady Rawleigh endured a prolonged martyrdom of suspense; and it appeared to her as if every creature of her acquaintance had entered into a combination against her peace. A host of early morning visitors seemed in league for her torment. Lady Olivia Tadcaster first made her appearance, with a large roll in her hand resembling that of a paper-hanger; containing patterns from Besford's of garlands which were to be embroidered on a table cover, nominally by her ladyship's own hands, but virtually by those of every idle victim she could recruit into the service. Whil-

Frederica was listening with the most anxious attention for her husband's knock, or, as the street door would probably remain open for the amusement of Lady Olivia's servants, so that he might enter unobserved,—for the creaking of the floor of his dressing-room above, her indefatigable aunt persisted in rolling and unrolling these crackling papers, the music of which might have served for a shower of hail at a minor theatre. Unless the person of Sir Brooke had emulated the ponderosity of Daniel Lambert, there could be no hope that the yielding boards above would produce an echo capable of drowning the united efforts of Lady Olivia's tongue, and Lady Olivia's rattling peals of thunder.

Before her ladyship had decided between the comparative facilities afforded to the needle by the sinuosities of the olive-branch, and the serrated leaves of the fern, Lady Lawford, perceiving by the equipage standing at the door, that Frederica was at home to morning visitors, took the opportunity of bestowing upon her a visitation as long, as tedious, and as unprofitable as if it had been paid 'at Rawleighford on a misty morning in November. And whereas, in Warwickshire she never descended on any but London topies—fashion, scandal, and dissipation—in Bruton-street, she judged it more effective to enlarge upon her new dairy, and the spinning prizes and bone-lace prizes she had recently instituted in her village. While favouring them with recitals and hints of her beneficent anti-pauperic plans, which would really have talked well in parliament, and had only the demerit of being incapable of fulfilment in any country less loosely legislated than Cochin-China, Lady Olivia occasionally interpolated a suggestion of melioration, borrowed from the experience of her travels;—sometimes from an *ospidaletto* at Ancona, sometimes from a *Spinn-haus* at Haerlem. These ladies talked and argued, as argumentative ladies are apt to do, simultaneously; while Frederica had to support the martyrdom of hearing knocks at the door fired off like minute guns, without venturing such a breach of decorum as to ring and inquire the names of her ceremonious visitors, and deafened by her vociferous companions beyond the power of distinguishing her husband's knock. Dull indeed must be the feminine ear which does not speedily acquire that auricular instinct. But alas! *what* instinct may avail amidst the din of an oil-mill, or the rhetorical dispute of two female Utilitarians, in the healthy maturity of their lungs!

At length, to her infinite joy, Lady Lawford, with her cheek bleached, and her nose reddened with suppressed anger—for Lady Olivia had out-talked her, as she would have done O'Kelly's parrot which chattered incessantly for one hundred years—rose to depart. But no sooner had her carriage driven away, and the victorious

mistress of the field, elated by her success, commenced a long diatribe against the folly of Lady Launceston, in forcing the company of Miss Elbany on her guests, than the door burst open ; and Frederica, in the sanguine anticipations of her affection, half rose from the sofa, to welcome her husband. But, alas ! it was only Mrs. William Erskyne who bounded into the room. Seizing Lady Rawleigh by the hand, she cast upon her aunt a glance of contemptuous detestation which would have exterminated any woman of less robust health than Lady Olivia Tadcaster ; who, regarding her niece's flippant friend as a species of gnat, troublesome in proportion to its insignificance, resolved to avoid the wing and sting of her insect antagonist by a hasty farewell.

"And now, my dear," cried Mrs. Erskyne, "now that sempiternal Semiramis in Tiffany, your respectable aunt, has taken her departure, put on your bonnet and come with me, without asking me why or whither. Do not look so terrified, child ! I will not decoy you to a conjuror's or a dentist's,—though I make you my own in spite of your teeth."

"I am not alarmed," replied Frederica, laughing at her mysterious eagerness. "But I cannot be the victim of your despotism this morning. I ride with Launceston at four o'clock."

"And it is not yet three ! Surely you do not require more than ten minutes to put on your habit?"

"Not five, I should imagine. But I am waiting for Rawleigh."

"To walk with you, arm-in-arm, to the Water-colour Exhibition, like the living picture of country cousinhood ? Fie ! my dear Fred. ! Will you never get rid of your odious provincial habits ? You positively deserve to be painted, framed and glazed, and hung up in the parlour of the Rawleigh Arms, as a pendant to the gentleman in top-boots, pointing out the nest of two turtle-doves to a lady in yellow shoes and a blue veil, and ticketed with the pleasing title of Domestic Felicity."

"But will you really bring me back in time for my ride ?" said Lady Rawleigh, without considering to what clause of her friend's argument this disjunctive conjunction attached itself.

"Grant me half an hour, and afterwards I am your slave till midnight," cried Mrs. Erskyne.

Unused to assert her independence, and like most other persons inexperienced in the world peculiarly under the influence of irony, poor Lady Rawleigh found herself quizzed into the necessity of following her friend into the chariot waiting at the door. She had however the negative consolation of learning from the butler, in butler phrase, as she passed him in the hall, that Sir Brooke had not "been in."

CHAPTER IX.

The connoisseur takes out his glass to pry
 Into each picture with a curious eye;
 Turns topsy-turvy my whole composition,
 And makes mere portraits all my exhibition.
 From various forms, Apelles Venus drew,
 So from the million do I copy you:
 "But still the copy's so exact," you say;—
 Alas! the same thing happens every day!

SAMUEL FOOTE.

LADY RAWLEIGH was too well acquainted with the nature of the trivialities actuating Mrs. Erskyne's existence, to expect any very important result from her compliance with the request thus peremptorily urged. She anticipated the sight of some new vase at Rittener's, some new ribbon at Harding's, or some new lithograph at Colnaghi's, as the utmost object of their expedition. Nor were her calculations very erroneous.

As they stopped at a private door in Regent-street, Louisa, assuming a smile of mysterious intelligence, exclaimed, "Now you must give me your candid opinion. I have no wish to be flattered, Frederica. A woman's flattery sounds to me as hollow as the Thames-tunnel."

Extremely puzzled as to the nature of the occasion which could render flattery distasteful to a little coquette like Louisa, Lady Rawleigh followed her friend into a small apartment; in the centre of which stood an easel covered with a sheet of silver paper.

"You must give me your sincere opinion as to the likeness," cried Mrs. Erskyne. "I have been sitting to Rochard; and to-day we are to decide, with the assistance of your better judgment, on the costume. There!" she exclaimed, drawing the last pin from the sheet, and displaying a half-finished miniature. When lo! an exquisite likeness of Miss Lucy Elbany burst upon their astonished eyes!—

"How strange!" cried Frederica.

"How provoking!" murmured Mrs. Erskyne. In another moment, Monsieur Rochard made his appearance, to rescue his property from their inopportune investigation, and produce from a drawer the portrait of Louisa. With a very clear conscience did Lady Rawleigh assure her friend of the resemblance and perfection of the performance. It was Mrs. Erskyne herself; softened by that touch of sentiment so wholly wanting in her nature, and so seldom wanting in the portraits of Rochard.

After an eager discussion of the comparative merits of a fashion-

able ball-dress,—of a Vandyke costume,—a Rembrandtized pelisse,—an aerial vesture of clouds—and the descriptive attractions of Rebecca, Annot Lyle, Medora, Yarico, a Peri, a Zingara, an Albanian peasant, and a Polish princess,—which left poor Louisa Erskine doubly perplexed by the multifarious suggestions of her fickle vanity, Frederica hazarded a request for a second glance at the miniature which had occupied the easel on their entrance. But the obliging artist, on an allusion to the subject, became suddenly as mysterious as if he had arrayed himself in the cloudy mantle in which Louisa had been so desirous of enveloping the Iris-like outline of her own portrait.

"Ah! pardon!" said Monsieur Rochard, with as decided a tone as politeness would allow. *"Mais d'abord c'est impossible. Cette jeune dame tient beaucoup au mystère. Elle se fait peindre pour offrir une surprise agréable à quelqu'un de sa famille."*

"Of my family, rather!" thought Lady Rawleigh.

"But as we do not know the lady," said Mrs. Erskyne, who very seldom entered Lady Launceston's dowager door, and had never seen the companion,—"we cannot betray her secret. Pray let us look at it again."

"I do not wonder, Madam, at your eagerness," said the artist; "for never did so faultless a model present itself to my pencil. But as I have promised to secure the picture from observation, I am persuaded you will not desire me to betray the confidence reposed in me."

Louisa, far more interested in the successful delineation of her own face than in the charms of the Venus de Medicis herself, readily dismissed the subject; and after some further arguments touching her dress and appointment for the following day, took her leave, and performed her promise of conveying back to Bruton-street Lady Rawleigh, whose attention was now completely engrossed by the mystery of Miss Elbany's sitting for her picture at the cost of thirty guineas. That it was destined for Lord Launceston, she did not a moment doubt; and Frederica almost wished she had accepted his offer touching the purchase of Mameluke, when she considered the objects to which he appeared inclined to devote his superfluous cash. The miniature of his mother's beautiful companion could only be valuable in his eyes as a specimen of *virtù*; and his sister naturally adjudged it to be a very unbecoming addition to the gallery at Marston Park.

On reaching home, her first measure was a repetition of her inquiry to Martin, touching the return of Sir Brooke; in reply to which, she had the vexation of learning that her husband had been at home for a quarter of an hour during her absence.

"Did he leave any message for me?"
 "No, my lady."
 "Did he inquire for me?"
 "No, my lady."
 "Did he go into the drawing-room, Martin?"
 "No, my lady."
 "Did he say whether he dined at home?"
 "No, my lady."
 "Did he order his horse?"
 "No, my lady."
 "His phaeton?"
 "No, my lady."

But Lady Rawleigh, happening to lift her eyes from the stair-carpet, at this crisis of her cross-examination, perceived that the identical Thomas, who had so grievously abused the fine mouth of Mameluke, during breakfast, was now opening his own to display a row of teeth, resembling a concatenation of milestones, at her expense. She was hurrying up stairs to avoid the irritation of witnessing his impertinence, when the jackanapes, descending from his consequential altitude as a standard footman, vouchsafed to volunteer some further information respecting his master's movements.

"Sir Brooke went into the library, my lady, to answer a note; and I mentioned to him that your ladyship was gone out airing with Mrs. William Erskyne."

"Did he ask how long I had been gone?"
 "No, my lady."
 "Did he inquire whether I had left any message?"
 "No, my lady."
 "Did he give no orders then?"
 "No, my lady."
 "Nor say anything?"
 "Oh! yes, my lady"—
 "What did he tell you?" said Frederica, stopping short on the stairs.

"To shut the door, my lady," said the footman, smothering a laugh, with a persuasion that he had succeeded in mystifying his gentle and indulgent mistress. It was well for Mr. Thomas that Lord Launceston, who, a few minutes afterwards, was at the door, assisting Lady Rawleigh to mount her new purchase, had no suspicion of his insolence, or the whip which he placed in her hands might have found a more apposite employment than that of tickling the shoulders of Mameluke.

"Where shall we go?" said Lord Launceston.

"Anywhere you please," was Frederica's listless reply, and uttered with better faith than usually dictates that very comprehensive answer.

"Hyde Park is full of dust; and the Regent's, of exhibitions and East wind."

"Shall we go and see the Hammersmith-bridge?" inquired Lady Rawleigh.

"By all means!" said Lord Launceston, turning his horse's head in that direction. "Though, as my friend Mrs. Waddlestone elegantly observes, we may chance to be smothered in onions among those detestable market gardens at Battersea."

"I should imagine they were guilty of nothing less refined than strawberries and asparagus at this season of the year. And every now and then, one is refreshed, along that road, by the sight of a staring old red brick villa of King William's time, with a cedar or two in the garden, looking as if it had strayed from Mount Carmel"—

"Or been planted by the hands of Sir Hans Sloane. I like those comfortable suburban retreats. They make one fancy that Orpheus has been striking up his country dances in Hanover-square,—beguiled its solid square mansions along the Fulham-road,—and left them scattered among plantations of Scotch firs."

"Your friends the Waddlestones reside somewhere in that neighbourhood?" said Frederica, by way of affording an opening to her brother's confessions.

"Yes!—My father-in-law's soap manufactory stands on the banks of the Thames, somewhere near Battersea," said his lordship, with the most unembarrassed coolness. "I understand that neither tree nor herbage will grow within an acre of its noxious vapours; and that it is indicted as a parochial nuisance once in six weeks.—A nuisance?—vile affectation!—for my part, I shall prefer its unctuous exhalations to the sickly aroma of Delcroix's, or Atkinson's shop. Think, my dear Fred., how proud you will be, when, in washing your fair hands, you detect beneath the intaglio of Windsor Castle on your soap, the names of Waddlestone and Co., or, perhaps, of Waddlestone, Launceston, and Co.!"

"How can you jest on such a subject!" cried Frederica, vexed by her brother's tone of bravado. "Think rather what would have been my father's feelings, could he have anticipated so degrading a connexion for his only son."

"My father used to make an annual speech on the amelioration of the manufacturing classes; and how can we amend them more satisfactorily than by a mutual exchange of our superfluous commodities, rank and wealth? By the way, Fred., I had a narrow

escape of being bored into my grave yesterday, by one of Rawleigh's stupid old stiffnecked relations. As I was riding into the Waddlestones' courtyard, I had the good fortune to encounter Mrs. Martha Derenzy's ark upon wheels."

"Does *she* visit those vulgar people?"

"She had been sitting toadying the soap-boiler's wife for two long mortal hours, by way of converting the luncheon at Waddlestone-house into her own early dinner. Yesterday she even brought some poor relation of the family to profit by the opportunity;—some silly prating girl, whose forward airs completely disgusted my poor dear timid Mrs. Waddlestone."

Frederica felt the colour rush into her cheeks; but suspecting that she had been detected by her brother, and that he was trying to provoke her into a betrayal of herself, she quietly rejoined, "Poor Mrs. Martha is not rich, and has a tribe of indigent nieces. We must not be too severe upon her for trying to secure a comfortable meal for one of them. Do *you* often dine at Waddlestone-house?"

"Not so frequently, perhaps, as I ought, under all the circumstances. When I first came to town, I was there every day. But since I discovered metal more attractive in Charles-street"—

"Bronze more Corinthian, you might say!"—

"I have somewhat neglected the *melting* charms of my Leonora."

"An honourable alternative certainly, between a tradesman's daughter and my mother's companion. Oh! Launceston—Launceston!—I thought you had better judgment."

"Between the *beaux yeux* of the one, and the *beaux yeux de la cassette* of the other, my heart—"

"Pray do not profane your heart by mention in such a case! By the way, as Miss Leonora is so experienced an artist, and Miss Lucy so admirable a model, I wonder you have not brought them together for the love of the arts."

"A good hint, Frederica!—I will certainly persuade my mother to bring down Miss Elbany to Marston, and Leonora shall beguile the honeymoon by taking her likeness."

"If such are your views, let me beg you, William, to refrain from mentioning the names of either of these ladies to me again; I never heard you talk in a strain so little to my taste."

"You are growing fastidious and prudish, from living too much in provincial society. But never mind, Fred. When you have passed a little time with Mrs. Waddlestone, you will resume all your former refinement. She will talk to you of '*bon ton*' and the '*beau monde*', '*à pâmer de rire*', as she would gracefully express herself."

"Pray let us discuss some more pleasing subject."

"Your husband's election, then. Do tell me, Fred., is it true, that Rawleigh has purchased the right of 'mumbling a few words inaudible in the gallery,' in the name and behalf of the borough of Martwich?"

"There is some negotiation on foot between him and Mr. Lexley."

"Negotiation! I had a better opinion of my friend Rawleigh. If he wants to get into the house, why not wait for the general election, and start for the county, like a man?"

"Because there is no vacancy;—and Sir Brooke has a great respect for our present county members."

"And no ready money to throw away on a contest. I perfectly understand that sort of patriotic magnanimity. The truth is that Rawleigh is a deuced careful fellow; and will weigh well his thirty pieces of silver before he has haggled through his bargain with that dealer in parliamentary stores, Mr. Judas Lexley."

Frederica fired up for her husband; and was about to retaliate on the meanness of that prodigality which stoops to repair its shattered fortunes in a soap-boiler's cauldron, when her better nature arrested the angry retort upon her lips. She could not, even in defence of Sir Brooke, give pain to her beloved brother. It is difficult, indeed, to indulge in a rancorous feeling towards any offender, on a pure balmy day in May, with the young leaves quivering and the blossoms opening around us; more especially when mounted on a favourite horse, which has been denied to our use for many previous months.

Lady Rawleigh, in the enjoyment of her ride, forgot for a time all the vexations of the morning. And when, on her return to Bruton-street, she accidentally encountered at the door the beloved object of her brother's ill-natured sarcasms, in whose favour her feelings were particularly moved by having recently heard him unfairly aspersed, she invited him by so affectionate a smile to assist her from her horse, that Sir Brooke was for a moment tempted to forget them also. Her eyes were so brightened by exercise, her cheek, glowing with health and youthful animation, afforded so becoming a relief to the locks slightly disordered by the effects of her ride,—that poor Rawleigh saw nothing in her aspect but the beaming and expressive loveliness of his own Frederica.

But as he was about to offer her his arm across the hall, the recollection that all this beauty had been deliberately, and in his despite, exhibited to the admiration of every lounger in Hyde-park, and that all this animated cheerfulness was probably rowed from the impulses of gratified vanity, he made way

wife to gather up the train of her habit and followed her upstairs with a feeling of as much bilious irritation, as though he had been already gazetted for Martwich, and numbered in a minority.

CHAPTER X.

Beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
After offence returning, to regain
Love once possessed; nor can be easily
Repulsed, without much inward passion felt,
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

MILTON.

"WELL, my dear!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, starting from an armchair to receive her, as Frederica entered the drawing-room, cheered by the prospect of a *tête-à-tête* dinner and evening with her husband. "Here you find me, in undisputed possession of the garrison!"

"You are come, I trust, to dine with us?" said poor Lady Rawleigh, in a tone of deep despondency, which vainly tried to sound hospitable, on perceiving by her aunt's full-dress cap, that it was intended for an evening visit.

"I am, indeed; and I will explain to you all the *perchè* of the business during dinner. It only wants a quarter to eight; so go and change your habit, my dear child, or your soles will be boiled into isinglass."

Lady Rawleigh, sincerely wishing that her aunt would change her habit of inquiring into other people's bills of fare and accepting them at sight without invitation, hastened to comply. While Sir Brooke, who had anticipated with some degree of embarrassment his solitary interview with his offending wife, and the difficulty of preserving the dignified demeanour of dissatisfaction with the person who helps one to a cutlet, and waits to be invited to a glass of Moselle,—and who, moreover, was aware that Lady Olivia had been too long a resident on the continent to entertain any disgust towards gentlemen who eat their dinner in boots,—was courteous and cordial in his welcome. By the time Frederica, rescued from her masculine disguise, and with her beautiful hair recalled to its usual trim array, re-entered the drawing-room, her ladyship had got as far as the second clause of her promised explanation; which, without any signal of *da capo* from poor Sir Brooke, she proceeded leisurely to recapitulate for the edification of his wife, on seating herself at the dinner-table between

"You see, my dear Fred.—as I told you this morning I *was* engaged to your mother, who is far from well, for a boiled chicken in her dressing-room, at six o'clock; because I wished to begin my evening early, having a *conversazione* at Professor Axiom's at nine,—a concert at the little duchess's at ten—and the assembly at Suffolk House at eleven."

"I trust mamma was not too much indisposed to receive you?" exclaimed Frederica, considerably agitated.

"No, my dear—nothing urgent. My sister is no worse than she has been for the last five-and-twenty years. But unluckily, after you quitted me this morning to go wandering about town with that flighty young friend of yours, I took it into my head to drive to the West India Docks, to see whether my protégé, Captain Mopsley, of the Scarmouth Castle, who is just arrived from Barbadoes, has brought the consignment of parrot's feathers I commissioned him to procure for my friend Princess Drakouitski. I cannot think what induced Mopsley to be so indiscreet,—but he persuaded me to go over the ship with him; and while I was tasting a few preserved limes, with an arrow-root biscuit in the cabin, he thought proper to mention (for the *first* time, observe) that he had been in quarantine off the Isle of Wight;—for that on the voyage home, the purser and one guinea-pig had died—*actually died*—of the yellow fever!—My dear niece, you might have knocked me down with one of the parrot's feathers!"

"How extremely incautious!—How very unpleasant!" exclaimed Sir Brooke, looking with some satisfaction at the voluminous extent of table-cloth which divided Lady Olivia in equidistance from himself and his dear Frederica. "Martin, bring me a glass of Madeira, and take another to Lady Rawleigh;—old Madeira is an anti-febrile specific. Lady Olivia, let me recommend *you* a glass; it may not yet be too late."

"Oh! I consider myself more than safe. I drove straight from Mile End to Sanger's in Oxford-street; and after drinking in the shop half a phial of Dr. Lotionostic's anti-pestiferous drops, caused my dress to be fumigated with the celebrated *Zimmer Rauch*, such as is used by the Turkish officers of health, at the quarantine Lazaretto in the pass of Rothenthurm."

"I thought I perceived the pungent odour of Thieve's vinegar in the drawing-room," observed Sir Brooke. "I was apprehensive that Lady Rawleigh might have been indisposed."

Lady Rawleigh felt particularly gratified by the tone of concern in which this apprehension was expressed.

"And so you see, my dear Frederica, happening to mention this untoward incident in Charles-street, your mother became as mu—"

alarmed as if I had arrived in a balloon from Grand Cairo. Nothing would induce her to sit down to table with me;—and that silly impudent Miss Elbany pretended to discern some livid spots about my eyes. She declared that the plague was written in my aspect; and every thing that *she* declares, you know, is authentic with my sister."

"I have not the least doubt," said Lady Rawleigh, "that mamma expected Launceston to dinner, and that the companion wished to secure her interview with him from your observation."

"Very likely!—but we must defeat her manœuvres. My carriage will be here immediately after dinner, to take me to my *conversazione*; and you must let me set you down in Charles-street."

"It was my intention to go and inquire after mamma, before I began to dress for Suffolk House," said Frederica. "But I have no idea of visiting her as a spy. Launceston is old enough to judge for himself; and if he choose to degrade his family by a union with his mother's companion"—she stopped short—for a sudden reminiscence of Mrs. Waddlestone, served to remind her that it was not his *marriage* with Miss Lucy Elbany which was likely to dishonour himself and his connexions.

Fortunately for Frederica, the attention of Lady Olivia was diverted from her embarrassment by the appearance of a dish of scalloped oysters in the second course.

"I was quite surprised to learn from my sister the other day, that she had her oysters from Grove," said she.—"As if any one in their senses dreamed of purchasing oysters from a fishmonger!"

"Who then ought to furnish them;—the baker?" inquired Sir Brooke, who shared in some slight degree his aunt Derenzy's predilection for domestic details.

"It is a trade in itself," replied Lady Olivia, swallowing an oyster with an air of infinite contempt. "Do you imagine that a Parisian gastronome, would eat an oyster from any other hands than those of the shell-fish merchant who sits on the stairs at the Rocher de Cancale?"

"But we, who reside in London, are compelled to forego that luxury. Martin, *who* supplies *us* with oysters?"—inquired Sir Brooke of his butler; who had fixed his eyes upon Lady Olivia with the abhorrence which upper servants are apt to cherish against visitors who give trouble and advice.

"Taylor of Piccadilly, Sir Brooke."

"Take away my plate!" cried Lady Olivia, indignantly. "I would as soon swallow my own kid gloves, as oysters which have been swimming without their shells all the morning in a fishmonger's brown pipkin."

"Why it stands to reason that their flavour *must* evaporate," observed Sir Brooke, pushing away his own. "Lady Rawleigh is too inexperienced a housekeeper to enter into these details at present. Your ladyship must be generous enough to assist her with your advice."

"Why I will tell you exactly how *I* manage," said Lady Olivia, who had now arrived at the point she desired. "There is a young man lately set up in business at Harwich, who formerly lived as valet with poor dear Mr. Tadcaster, and whom I consider it my duty to patronize. I have given him a commission to supply *me* once a-week during the season; and I will get a frank to-night at Axiom's, and write to him to-morrow, to send a supply to *you* at the same time. Your establishment is larger than mine, so that you will require double the quantity."

"Oysters are already out of season," said Frederica, negatively.

"And *once* a-week!" cried Sir Brooke.—"Surely it is better to depend upon Taylor for a *daily* supply?"

"By sending the barrels round by Doddingham, which is not above eight or ten miles out of the way, I get them brought at a very reasonable rate by an errand-cart kept by a cousin of my maid's. It is not *many* days on the road; and the carter is a trustworthy man, who may be relied on. Well, my dear child," said Lady Olivia, changing the conversation to escape the excuse of her niece, "and how did you find Mameluke this morning?—It seemed to me, when you stopped at the door, that he went rather lame."

"Oh dear no!—He never went better in his life. I was enchanted with *him* and with my ride."

"Did you meet Sir Robert Morse, and Lord Putney?—I fell in with them just after I left you, and told them you were going out riding at four, and would be glad of their escort."

"I did not happen to see them."

"Why, which way did you go?—I thought they could not possibly miss you in the park?"

"But we never went near the park."

"Only through it, not near it—the sophistry of fine ladies!" said Sir Brooke half aside.

"Neither near it, nor through it;—but simply along Grosvenor-place, and the King's-road, to Hammersmith. I had never seen the suspension-bridge, and Launceston was eager to indulge my curiosity."

"Lord! my dear, why did you not tell me you were going into the King's-road?" cried Lady Olivia. "I would have given you a commission to procure me some of that celebrated Chelsea lavender"

water; and I am sure your mother, with *her* delicate sight, would have been very glad of some rose-water. How provoking!"

"Will you take some strawberries, my dear Frederica?" said Rawleigh, unexpectedly gratified by the removal of his park suspicions.

"Not any, I thank you," replied Lady Rawleigh, coldly.

"Some preserved ginger, then?"

"Not any, I am much obliged to you."

"A biscuit, Frederica?"

"I never eat biscuits."

"At least you will not refuse a glass of wine with me?" said Sir Brooke, in a tone which instantly overcame the air of magnanimous obduracy assumed by his wife. Frederica put the glass to her lips, with a smile which said as plainly as she could speak, "Are you not ashamed of having suspected me unjustly?" She had at length detected the prejudice entertained by her husband against fashionable horsemanship!

"But why did you not tell me that you were unwilling to give up your daily ride?" said Sir Brooke, replying across the table to her very intelligible smile of interrogation. "Why deprive me of the happiness of conduced to your amusement by sending for Jessy?"

"I really believe you are jealous of Mameluke," said Frederica, smiling again, as she rose to leave the dining-room with Lady Olivia. "I fancy I must make him a present to Launceston, to ease your apprehensions. Good-bye! you will find me in Charles-street, when you have finished your wine."

But to the disappointment of both ladies, Lady Olivia's carriage had not yet made its appearance; and her unlucky niece was only the more vexed at the prospect of a *tête-à-tête*, when she found her ladyship obstinately bent on discovering the object of her drive with Mrs. William Erskyne. In a very short time, Lady Olivia's cross-examinations had wormed out the whole secret of their visit to Monsieur Rochard, and of Miss Elbany's mysterious miniature.

"My dear child, you overwhelm me with horror!" exclaimed the fussy aunt, when Frederica reached the climax of the history. "That girl,—a clergyman's orphan,—a mere needy adventurer,—throw away *thirty* guineas on a miniature?—Impossible!—Where is she to get such a sum?—I trust you considered it your duty to lay the circumstances before Monsieur Rochard, and to inquire specifically whether your brother has agreed to pay for the picture?"

"I consider it a far more urgent duty to guard poor Launton's indiscretions from the inquisitions of strangers. Even had

I been inclined to push my discoveries touching this unaccountable miniature, the artist seemed to have received his lesson, and to be as secret as the grave."

"Could we but prove that there exists an understanding between them, of course your mother would no longer hesitate to turn this crafty companion of hers out of doors. It would be a most important satisfaction on every account."

"On my brother's, I admit. But believe me, Miss Elbany is much too cunning to have committed herself."

"I tell you what we will do, Frederica. You have long been talking of presenting your portrait to my sister—"

"I was anxious to sit to Mrs. Robertson, at the time of my marriage. But Sir Brooke would not hear of losing so many hours of my company. Perhaps he might think differently *now* on the subject."

"Well, never mind Sir Brooke. He has nothing to do with the matter. But you must positively sit to Rochard, and contrive to get your mother and her companion to the house to look at your picture,—the mine will explode;—every thing will go right. Miss Elbany will be turned into the street;—and my nephew unite himself with Mrs. Woodington, of Woodington Park."

"I neither desire nor anticipate the fulfilment of these two latter clauses; nor, to say the truth, would it be convenient to me to throw away so large a sum just now. I fear I must defer my present to mamma till another season."

"Why you told me, the other day, that you had not yet found occasion to have recourse to your pin money? You have been married three-quarters of a year; and the horse you have so inconsiderately thought proper to buy, cost you only eighty pounds. What *can* you have done, or rather what *can* you mean to do, with the remaining two hundred and twenty?"

"Put it in the Savings bank of course," said Frederica, ironically; for she was by no means anxious to acquaint so notorious a gossip as her aunt Olivia with the private nature of her engagements respecting the opera-box.

"Well then, I can only say that you show a very strange degree of apathy touching the honour and interest of your family. With a settlement of four hundred a year pin money, I really think you might expend thirty, without any great stretch of generosity, in forwarding the welfare of your only brother."

Frederica, whose hand was by nature as open as her heart, blushed to hear herself thus unjustly accused of penuriousness.—"If you thought my sitting to Rochard would be of any real advantage—" she began.

"Of great advantage,—of the very greatest!" cried her aunt. "I rejoice, my dear niece, to perceive that your mind is under the influence of rational argument,—that *my* representations have their due effect. And as I must pass through Regent-street on my way to Professor Axiom's, I shall certainly step in, and make an appointment for your first sitting, either for to-morrow, or the following day."

Lady Rawleigh saw that it was in vain to resist a project so obstinately determined on by Lady Olivia. She knew, of old, the pertinacity of her ladyship's resolutions; and felt satisfied that had she even determined this sitting to take place in the fever-stricken cabin of Captain Mopaley's, Scarmouth Castle, obedience must have been the sole alternative. She was vexed, however, to find a further expenditure forced upon her incurrence; vexed to perceive that Sir Brooke, in spite of their tacit reconciliation, made no movement to leave the dining-room sooner than usual, in order to accompany her to Lady Launceston's. She even fancied, as she crossed the hall towards Lady Olivia's carriage, that she could hear him *snore!*—that he could sleep, and sleep profoundly too, so shortly after the first éclaircissement of their first misunderstanding, was a bitter aggravation of her woes! Lady Rawleigh found herself ascending her mother's staircase, with a persuasion that all which Milton, and Dr. Johnson, and other literary miscreants, have been pleased to utter touching the evils of the marriage state, falls very short of the afflictions poured forth from the vials of wrath upon its modern victims! Forgetting for a moment the importunate officiousness of the Companion, she longed to weep away her heaviness by her mother's side; and expatiate in the luxury of woe with as little delay as possible, in order that her eyes might recover their pristine brilliancy in time to grace the brilliant saloons of Suffolk House.

It may be observed of women, in all conditions of life, that however promoted by marriage above their former condition,—however magnificent the roof destined to shelter their matronly maturity, home—the old familiar house of their girlhood—never forfeits its spell over their hearts. As an unfailing city of refuge, its "ancient most domestic furniture," is invested with a species of holiness in their eyes. Its viands have a familiarity of flavour never acquired by the dainties of more splendid fare; its sights, its sounds, its associations, have a stronger hold upon the affections than can belong to any future residence. *There*, where their innocent hearts—scorning all evidence of the hollowness and evil of the world as arising from misanthropic testimony—delighted of 'Id to indulge in the vision of human perfectibility, of mutual love,

of goodness elevated above the touch of earthly passion, of virtue fixed beyond the influence of circumstances—*there*, where their souls were entranced by a rapture of devotion unsullied by mortal transgressions, unalloyed by shame, unwedded to earth by the vulgar cares of venal interest—*there*, even there, do they flee in their domestic afflictions, for a respite from trouble and anxiety. Like the dove of the deluge, they are driven back to their ark by the turmoil and strife of the wide ocean of the world.

Lady Launceston, as was usual with her on her days of indisposition—days of far more than red-letter recurrence in her valetudinarian calendar—was in her dressing-room; and Frederica remembered, as she approached the door, the joy with which, on her holiday release from the school-room, awful with its charts of ancient and modern history hanging from black rollers on the wall, she had been wont to fly to the gentle fostering love of her mother, to be petted with peppermint-drops and Tolu lozenges; and with which, in her maturer days, [she used to creep in with one of Andrews's marble-covered third volumes in her hand, with a promise “not to interrupt mamma,” but with an intention, duly fulfilled, of pouring forth her girlish tribulations concerning the rivalship of Laura Mapleberry, or of Sir Brooke Rawleigh's pre-dilection for a phaeton. She recollects, with a thrill of love, the cherishing softness of her mother's hand as it lingered on her shoulder, or reprovingly patted her cheek. Even the vapour of ether which habitually tinged any atmosphere frequented by Lady Launceston, had a peculiar charm to her senses, as associated with that intercourse of filial affection so dear to her heart.

With feelings attuned by consciousness such as this, did Lady Rawleigh carefully turn the handle of the dressing-room door, that she might steal to her mother's side and console herself as of old. When lo! a sight presented itself to her swimming eyes, which Niobized her warm heart in a moment!

Extended on a sofa, with her feet covered as usual with an eider-down quilt, lay Lady Launceston, her Mechlin cap plaited with its usual nicety round her pale face. The reader, I perceive, is becoming agitated,—anticipates a terrible catastrophe,—sudden death, or at the very least a fainting fit. But Lady Olivia Tadcaster's information on the subject may be implicitly relied on. Her sister was precisely in the same state of health which had kept her in a sort of chicken-broth convalescence for five-and-twenty years. What then was the motive of the universal tremor which suddenly arrested the steps of Frederica on entering the dressing-room? What hideous spectacle presented itself to her eyes?

On a low stool, beside Lady Launceston's couch, sat Miss Elba-

her head familiarly reclining against the pillow of her patroness, whose thin delicate hand was fondling the cheek of the presumptuous hireling with precisely the same gentle tenderness she had been wont to bestow upon her daughter ! Poor Frederica ! The hallowed dream of eighteen years vanished from around her. She saw—she felt—she knew—that she was superseded in her mother's affections !

Willingly would she have withdrawn herself from the chamber, to give a free course to her tears elsewhere ; but the sound of the deep sigh that burst from the depths of her heart, arrested the attention of the self-sufficing pair.

" Oh ! here is Lady Rawleigh," cried Miss Elbany, in the tone of commonplace recognition, which conveys a total want of interest in the subject : and she rose from her footstool and wheedling attitude, to resume the habits of her vocation, and place a chair for the new comer.

" I did not expect to see you this evening, my dear," said Lady Launceston, with the negligent ease of a mother who knows her daughter to be surrounded in her new home with all the temporal blessings of life, as well as by the fervent affection of her husband. " I thought you would scarcely have time to look in before you dressed for Suffolk House."

Frederica had too much feminine pride and constancy not to subdue the emotions struggling in her bosom, and the aching pain in her throat which seemed to impede her respiration.

" Hearing from my aunt Olivia, who dined in Bruton-street, that you were indisposed, I hastened hither to inquire after you," faltered the deeply mortified daughter.

" Thank you, my dear, thank you," said Lady Launceston, wholly unconscious of the pain she was inflicting. " But you need never be uneasy on my account. Lucy is so very attentive, so kind, and so perfectly understands the management of a case like mine, that I am becoming independent both of my friends and medical attendants."

" Friends!"—refrigerated into the comprehensive class of her mother's friends!—joined with the multitude of Lady Smiths and Mrs. Williamses, who were in the habit of sending their compliments, and begging to know " how Lady Launceston found herself that morning." Poor Frederica !

" And when your brother ascertained that my sister Olivia did not dine here, he was good-natured enough to stay and eat an impromptu cutlet. I am expecting him up from the dining-room every moment. Ah ! there he is on the stairs. Launceston is the

only person in this house who ever takes two steps at a time.—Miss Elbany, my dear, ring for coffee!"

Well did Frederica recollect the time when nothing would have induced Lord Launceston to take a cup of coffee in his mother's dressing-room, which he was accustomed to call the temple of Esculapius, and to fancy impregnated his coat with the flavour of camphor!

CHAPTER XI.

When Jewels are sparkling round me,
And dazzling with their rays,
I weep for the ties that bound me
In life's first early days;
I sigh for one of the sunny hours
Ere day was turned to night,
For one of my nosegays of fresh wild flowers,
Instead of those jewels bright.

MRS. NORTON.

If the excitement of gratified vanity could have sufficed to restore to Lady Rawleigh that happy ease of a contented heart with which she arrived in London, all might have been well. As Frederica Rawdon, she had never passed for what is called "a beauty." No peculiarities of dress or address had attracted the attention of the public towards the tranquil loveliness of her countenance, or the unpretending grace of her person. No reputation for miraculous accomplishments, no notoriety of flippant wit, had startled the attention of society into an acknowledgment of her charms. But as the wife of Sir Brooke Rawleigh, of Rawleighford, with her diamonds, and her definite position in the world as a squiress of some eight or ten thousand a-year, she became an angel.

Younger brothers might now dangle after her, from party to ball, from park to opera, without fear that a vigilant chaperon should inquire into their pretensions and frown away their homage. Noblemen with ragged rent-rolls, and captains in the guards with no rent-roll at all, no longer considered themselves debarred from the delightful privilege of seeking her mantle among those miscellaneous heaps of female habiliments, which one of the vile necessities of a climate between the tropic and the North Pole nightly amasses in ball-giving London. She was now approachable by married and single—availables and detrimentals; and as a woman who regards the whole mass of fashionable society with indifference, is far more at her ease, and capable of rendering herself generally agreeable, than the coquette whose eye is ever on the

: watch to catch the attention of some duke, or the flirt whose still worse governed feelings blind her to the presence of all mankind saving some boy-captain of the Blues who hovers about her chair—Frederica became one of the most popular beauties of the day.

It would be a libel upon female nature to say that Lady Rawleigh was wholly insensible to these triumphs. For her own share of the distinction thus achieved, she enjoyed it indeed with as much moderation as Lady Grace in the play. But when it glanced across her mind that Sir Brooke might perhaps become less addicted to dining in dusty boots, and running after Mr. Lexley, if he saw her the object of universal idolatry, she permitted her lips to relax into smiles far oftener than her heart suggested; and even with the feverish spot still burning on her cheek which had been branded there by the spectacle of her mother's exaggerated tenderness towards the companion, she became the leading star of the brilliant assemblage at Suffolk House. Radiant with jewels, and enhanced in beauty by all the auxiliaries of the toilet, she felt how much her sighs would be misplaced amid that smiling, sparkling, heartless, soulless crowd, with whose moral or immoral contentions her gentle nature was so little fitted to contend.

On their entrance into the picture-gallery, Sir Brooke suddenly deserted her side, to go and talk county polities with a little knot of middle-aged men; and Frederica, who, in common with the rest of her sex, felt that pauperism and emigration were quite sufficiently discussed in the much-enduring ears of Parliament, and the long-enduring pages of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, had little patience with his defection upon so small a temptation.

Unluckily for Rawleigh, Lord Calder seized this opportunity to plant himself by the side of the fair and deserted Ariadne; and by his graceful courtesies, and that varied flow of conversation so perfect in its tone, by which he was enabled to augment at will the host of his auditors, he so thoroughly captivated her attention, that she forgot not only the desertion of Sir Brooke, but all her prejudices against himself. Before they parted, Frederica had promised to join his lordship's supper party on the following Tuesday.

A few minutes afterwards, her husband, having with difficulty extricated himself from the group of political economists, by whom his first and third buttons had been argued off his coat, returned to persuade her that she was fatigued, and anxious to go home; and on the whole, her evening might have terminated agreeably, had they not been detained five minutes in the vestibule, waiting for their carriage. Frederica was now eagerly attacked by Mrs. William Erskyne, whom they found detained by a similar dilemma.

"Dearest Fred., I have been dying to speak to you all the evening. But I entertain too much value for your regard to interrupt that long and tremendous flirtation with Lord Calder. I *did* hazard to touch you once or twice on the arm, when I recollect that to-morrow is not our night for the Opera, and that I shall not see you till Wednesday. But you were lending too anxious an ear to his lordship's whispers, to notice my importunity."

"And what is the nature of your urgent communication!" inquired Frederica, coldly, for she was vexed that her husband should be misled by so idle a misrepresentation of the fact.

"Oh! nothing of the least importance to *you*. Nothing worthy to break off a *tête-à-tête* with Lord Calder. I want you to take me to Almack's on Wednesday; for I shall come back late from the races, and find nothing but tired servants, and a husband angry with the aspect of his book. Will you be so charitable?"

"Willingly; on condition that if you feel inclined to stay late, you will find some other person to take you home. My hairdresser has appointed such a very early hour on Thursday morning that—"

"You are going to the drawing-room?" interrupted Mrs. Erksyne, with the most courteous incivility. "Then why bore yourself with Almack's at all—to get up after three hours' feverish sleep with hollow eyes and pallid cheeks? Cannot you make up your mind to renounce a single ball?"

"No, indeed!" cried Lady Rawleigh, piqued by the sarcasms of her friend, and the conjugal grunt with which they were echoed by Sir Brooke, into an affectation of obstinacy foreign to her nature. "Depend on me, therefore, for Wednesday night."

As she was hurried by Sir Brooke through a mob of footmen towards her carriage, Lady Rawleigh began to anticipate the annoyance of a sullen *tête-à-tête* on their homeward drive. Nor was she disappointed. Her husband pulled his shapeless opera-hat over his face, and began to describe circles and all manner of geometrical problems with the point of his well-varnished shoe upon the front of the chariot, with an evident determination to be silent and sulky. He was wrong. If men were aware of the effect they produce in those nightcaps of black felt, tired, haggard, and dusty, as seen through the lurid atmosphere of a London morning twilight, they would never select that untimely moment for a touch of the heroics.

"Perhaps it may do him good to ruminant upon Louisa's representations," thought the drowsy wife; as on her arriving in Bruton-street dressing-room, she resigned herself to Mrs. Pasley's hands, to have handfuls of her fine hair uprooted in the process of being unfrizzed for the night.

We have been admonished by the wisest of men, that the sun should not go down upon our wrath. But had Solomon penetrated half the mysteries of the female breast, he would have additionally interdicted a sunset upon our *coolness*! Anger is of brief endurance, and soon raves itself to rest, but coolness is as long-lived as other cold-blooded animals. It is as the toad which exists for a thousand years in the heart of a rock! Were I, like Dr. Gregory and other moral philosophers, to bequeath a legacy of counsel to my daughters, I would say, "Never sleep upon a misunderstanding with those you love. If you feel less kindly towards them than usual, the chances are that you are in the wrong."

This truth was very painfully manifested to Lady Rawleigh when, at nine o'clock on the following morning, Mr. Lexley made his appearance at the door in a travelling-carriage,—not on his road to Hampton, but to Martwich; and succeeded in persuading her husband, who gave him an audience in his dressing-gown, to become the companion of his journey. Something had occurred to traverse the election which rendered their presence necessary; and after scalding his mouth with a hurried cup of tea, and disgusting himself with a half-boiled egg, the unshorn candidate for parliamentary honours uttered a hasty farewell to his wife, a parting charge to Martin, and jumped into the carriage which was to convey him from his distempered home to his disorganized borough. Frederica beheld his departure from her bed-room window. And when she saw the dressing-box enveloped in its travelling case shoved into the chaise by Martin, and placed at the feet of Sir Brooke, she bitterly repented not having, on the preceding evening, explained away the illnatured observations of Mrs. Erskyne, and acquainted him with her engagement to Lord Calder. She took refuge on her pillow against her reflections, and had the comfort of dreaming them away till one o'clock, when she was roused by Pasley with her cup of chocolate, and beheld the face of Lady Olivia peeping over her maid's shoulder.

"Not up yet, my love?—what shocking habits!—If you indulge yourself in this manner at *your* age, Frederica, what will you be at mine? A poor fragile creature, nourished upon sal-volatile, like your mother."

"We stayed rather late at Suffolk House."

"No wonder! You did not make your appearance there till *I* and every reasonable being had taken leave. *I* was there as soon as the candles were lighted, and was consequently enabled to rise this morning at eight. I hired a footman and laundry-maid for my cousin Wingfield in Yorkshire, breakfasted, settled my accounts, and read half a volume of Nares's Life of Burghley (which I chose,

because it was the thickest book in Sams' library) before nine. And I have since driven with Mrs. Woodington, as far as Hackney, to look for a *Draconia* to present to Lady Huntingfield on her birth-day. By the way I met Rawleigh, with post-horses, in a strange carriage, near the second milestone?"

"I am sorry to say he has been obliged to go down into Cambridgeshire about this electioneering business."

"Pray, my dear, do not indulge in such an abuse of language. Electioneering? Call it borough-mongering at once."

"The name is nothing, compared with the annoyance of Sir Brooke's departure; for which I was quite unprepared."

"Unprepared?—You are as silly as your mother; whom I left just now *preparing* herself with saline draughts for a cold, which she protests is hovering over her. Well, I am very glad Rawleigh is gone. It will leave us ample leisure for the miniature; and you are to sit to-day at three o'clock."

"I am almost sorry I have undertaken the fatigue, just now. At this season of the year, one is worried to death by engagements; or rather to a state of feverish frightfulness, worse than death to a woman."

"In the first place, this season of the year happens to be the only season when reasonable beings are to be found in London; and, in the next, *you*, my dear, who talk of engagements are the idlest, the most do-nothing of human beings."

"Do not call me names, dear aunt," said Frederica, languidly; "for I am out of spirits, or out of sorts, or whatever polite term is just now in vogue for being out of temper."

"You?—Why what can you, the spoiled child of fortune and affection, have to vex you? Have you seen a newer pattern for diamond girandoles than your own, or have you chosen an unbecoming trimming for your train?—Poor soul!"

"You do right to laugh at me; for I have little pretext for murmuring. Nevertheless, I am deeply mortified by Launceston's proceedings, and at the manner in which they are sanctioned by mamma. As we predicted, I found him dining in Charles-street last night; and the hour I passed there was enlivened by Miss Elbany's performances on the harp, and by my brother's hints respecting 'Rawleigh's objections to my riding, Rawleigh's dread of my independence, and Rawleigh's anxiety to put me in leading-strings to Aunt Martha Derenzy.' Sir Brooke *may* have faults. I do not uphold him as a paragon; but I think it extremely unkind on Launceston's part to expose them to ridicule for the amusement of that odious girl—a stranger to the family, and a most unfit person to be intrusted with its secrets."

"Depend on it, my dear, she is far too deeply occupied with her own, to care about yours. Did William pay her much attention?"

"I cannot say he did, but everything wore a much worse aspect. They appeared to understand each other perfectly, and be upon the happiest terms of intimacy."

"They are certainly engaged!" cried Lady Olivia, falling back in her chair with a severe concussion. "My poor, dear, infatuated sister,—my poor, dear, obstinate, ill-fated nephew!—the ancient house of Trevelyan,—the unsullied name of Rawdon!"

"Nay, dear aunt, I have no reason to think the evil so far advanced."

"Irrevocable, irrecoverable, irremediable ruin!" cried Lady Olivia, searching into the heterogeneous contents of her steel-embroidered bag for her handkerchief, to conceal an imaginary burst of tears. "I, Frederica, who am in the secret of my nephew's embarrassments—who have sat hour after hour upon a mahogany stool in a little dusty cupboard in Lincoln's-inn, filing off his unpaid bills on iron skewers, lest his solicitor should audit them with an imperfect scrutiny—I, who have insured his life in half the offices in London, for the better security of his annuitants—I, who have his rent-roll by heart, and the list of his mortgages by head—I, my dear Lady Rawleigh, am able to appreciate all the horror, all the ruin, all the wickedness of this abominable connexion!"

"When I reflect," said her niece, "that this unfortunate young person represents herself as a clergyman's daughter—"

"Unfortunate? I wish we may none of us have worse luck. And a *clergyman's daughter*? My dear, that is a regular companion-and-governess-advertisement trap! What sort of clergyman do you suppose Miss Elbany's father to have been? A respectable incumbent of a respectable vicarage, like your own Dr. Jackson? No, no! Some reverend divine such as those I saw, in smock-frocks, selling char among the Westmoreland lakes; and preaching on Sundays in thatched churches, large enough to hold twelve persons without much squeezing."

"But those were Sectarians?"

F "As regularly ordained Church of England divines as any in the diocese! Elbany—Elbany? I once had a hosier of that name, who lived in Holborn, and sold the best fleecy hosiery I ever used. Poor dear Mr. Tadcaster used to swear by it in his fits of the rheumatism."

Frederica perfectly well remembered who it was Mr. Tadcaster used to swear *at* in his fits of the rheumatism.

"I have no doubt he was her uncle!" mused Lady Olivia.

"Because you expect to be her aunt?" said Lady Rawleigh, blundering on poor Mr. Tadcaster as the antecedent of the pronoun. Nay! Dismiss your fears on that head. It is not my apprehension that Launceston will make my mother's companion his *wife*, that disgusts me with his conduct. You must allow me to explain to you (in strict confidence) that he is engaged to marry another person."

"How? You amaze me! Worse and worse! Ten to one there will be the damages of a breach-of-promise action to be provided for!"

"No. In spite of the ill-judged attentions which Launceston allows himself to pay to the person whom mamma has so foolishly thrown in his way, I am persuaded he is sincerely attached to Leonora Waddlestone."

"Leonora whom?" exclaimed Lady Olivia, half rising from her chair.

"Alas! my dear aunt! I grieve to mortify you by such humiliating intelligence. But William is on the point of marriage with a soapboiler's daughter."

"A *what?*" panted the agonized aunt.

"With the only daughter of Mr. Waddlestone, an eminent soap-boiler."

"Of Waddlestone House?"

Lady Rawleigh nodded assent.

"Hurrah!" cried Lady Olivia, clapping her hands, and starting from her seat. "My dear Launceston—my own dear William—my godson—my favourite nephew! I always said he would live to be an ornament to his family. I always knew he would distinguish himself. Frederica—Frederica, why did you never set me at ease on this point before? I will go directly to my sister's, and make an apology to Miss Elbany for all my rudeness;—I will—"

"I trust you will take no steps in consequence of what I have communicated. I am under a promise to Launceston not to mention the subject to mamma. And, though you were not specified in the agreement, I have every reason to suppose he wishes the affair to be kept a secret in the family."

"In order that he may carry on his silly flirtation with poor Lucy?"

"Let us think better of him. But tell me, dear aunt, you who were so scandalized at the notion of his marriage with a hosier's niece, what can you see to enchant you in his union with—"

"The heiress of one of the wealthiest men in England? Everything! You will find, my dear Fred., that in this nation of shopkeepers, a little city gold becomes necessary, once in a centur

assist in emblazoning the escutcheon, where there is neither a coal-pit nor a lead-mine on the family estate, to pay off the fortunes of the younger children, and the jointures of dowagers. Why there is young Tadcaster, my nephew, who has every prospect of paying me three thousand a-year for forty—or say five-and-forty years. A hundred and twenty thousand pounds. His estate is barely five, Irish currency. So you see he *must* marry an heiress."

"But there are heiresses who are not daughters to soap-boilers."

"Not such heiresses as Miss Waddlestone; who has a hundred thousand pounds in ready money, and five hundred thousand more on the death of the father. Think of that, my love. Think of poor dear old Marston Park with all its encumbrances paid off; Think of—"

"I would rather not think of any advantage achieved by such unsatisfactory means."

"Folly,—absurdity,—mere narrowness of mind. Intellectual people are above such obsolete prejudices. Had your brother offered himself and his encumbered estates to any young woman of good family as well as good fortune, her pretensions would have been enormous. Her father would have stifled us with parchments, and demanded a settlement of jointure and pin-money—"

(Frederica sighed.)

"enough to beggar a duke. But with a soap-boiler, the affair is different,—a matter of traffic and barter,—tare and tret;—pedigree against pence,—pounds against precedence. Not that I should have ever recommended *you*, Frederica, to marry a soap-boiler. The wife descends to her husband's condition; and an Honourable Mrs.—or even a Lady Frederica Waddlestone, must remain a nobody. Whereas Lady Launceston assumes at once your brother's dignities; and it matters little, except to the compilers of the peerage, by what patronymic she was ushered into the world."

"I wish it had been anything but Waddlestone," sighed Frederica, putting the finishing stroke to her toilet.

"Mr. Waddlestone is one of the most enlightened men in England," cried Lady Olivia. "When I was at Rome, the family occupied part of my hotel; and his antechamber was crowded with virtuosi and dilettanti, like that of an ambassador. He swept every studio and atelier in the place; and Milor Vatilsdon became as well known in Italy as Napoleon."

"But the mother—the odious mother!"

"Is she still alive? But a man does not marry his mother-in-law."

"Mrs. Woodington is in the drawing-room, my lady," said Mrs. Basley, throwing open the door in some vexation that her mis-

tress had thought proper to exclude her from the mysteries of the toilet.

"How could they admit that woman? My utter aversion," cried Lady Rawleigh.

"And mine too, now that she no longer suits my plans for Launceston. However, my dear Fred., there is no occasion to let her know that her hopes are over. For the poor silly little creature would break her heart. Between ourselves, she has supplied me with pines and peaches from Woodington Park, all the season, by way of propitiating your brother's relations. Good-bye, my dear, I shall meet you at Rochard's, at three. Meantime, I must go and leave my name at Kensington Gore, upon my old friends the Waddlestones. One cannot be too prompt in civilities on such occasions."

CHAPTER XII.

There's na luck about the house,
There's na luck at a',
There's little pleasure in the house
When my good man's awa.

BURNS.

IT is a well-known necessity in the annals of our English Constitution, that a man must eat his way into Parliament; and while Sir Brooke Rawleigh was enduring the unctuosities of a dinner at the Black Bull, at Martwich,—seasoned by twelve cockle-shell saucers of pickles of divers colours by way of *hors d'oeuvres*, by a tumulus of blancmange with a nosegay in its bosom by way of centre to a miscellaneous second course,—by the presence of Mr. Amos Robson, and Mr. Jeremiah Jobson (two gentlemen in cooduroys, deeply implicated in the interests of the borough, whom Mr. Lexley called "good friends," and "these influential gentlemen," every second minute),—Frederica was indulging in all the ruminative misery of her first widowhood; having dismissed the untouched dinner-tray, and wrapt her peignoir round her in the easy chair of her dressing-room.

In her hand was a volume of one of Madame de Souza's touching novels. On the little marble table by her side, was a scented taper casting its pale reflection upon a bouquet of the freahest roses. At her feet was the velvet ottoman brought home by Lord Launceston from his Turkish travels; behind her head, the cambric pillow embroidered with her own initials by her mother's hand. She looked the very picture of voluptuous indolence; and had Rochard seen her in that attitude, with the scattered tresses of her

raven hair entangled round her beautiful hand and wrist, he would have presented a fairer Lady Rawleigh to the admiration of posterity, than could be hoped from the formal model she had afforded with her locks tortured by a French hairdresser, and her robe primly adjusted.

But, alas! the ease of Frederica's position was wholly extrinsic. In spite of the lustrous taper, her soul was dark as that of Sampson Agonistes. In spite of the air-stuffed cushions in which she was buoyantly embedded, her frame appeared encircled by one of the compressive engines of the Inquisition. And had she swallowed all the *hors d'œuvres* of the Martwich dinner, her feelings could not have been more acidulated against herself and all mankind.

After her morning's endurance of nearly an hour of Mrs. Woodington's toadyism, which she longed to curtail by a simple statement that Lord Launceston's hand was already bespoken, Frederica found it necessary to prepare for the miniature; and the necessity of enduring the martyrdom of full dress at three o'clock on a summer's day, is in itself a trial of human patience. But when she found herself actually seated to be examined by the curious eye of art, with the full glare of sunshine beaming on her face, while Lady Olivia, who could not be contented to absent herself from the first sitting, fidgeted up and down, tormenting the artist with advice, and her niece with comments which she dared not derange her features by answering with proper spirit, her heart sickened under these petty irritations. Though Lady Olivia no longer cared a straw whether Miss Elbany chose to sit for a hundred and fifty pictures, or even whether her nephew chose to render himself responsible for their cost, such was her inquisitiveness, that she tortured her niece by her ill-bred mode of pushing her inquiries on a point which so little concerned her; and Lady Rawleigh sincerely rejoiced when her hour of penance was at an end, and Monsieur Rochard bowed her signal of release.

"Is Hancock your jeweller, my dear?" said her aunt, as they stepped into the carriage; and upon Lady Rawleigh's affirmative, Lady Olivia gave orders that they should be driven to Bruton-street.

"You must not ask me to get out," said Frederica; "I was in hopes we were going straight home, that I might put on my morning dress."

"Enveloped in your mantle, no one perceives your evening costume; and I will lend you my veil," said the merciless Lady Olivia, throwing over the beautiful head of her companion a white web, whose consistency might have served on an exigency for a table-cloth, but which called itself British lace. "You must not

refuse me the gratification of seeing you choose a setting for these," she continued, taking out a little box pestiferous with musk, containing a set of Roman mosaics large enough to have decorated the Lord Mayor's state harness. "I flatter myself they are particularly fine. They were selected by my poor friend, Cardinal Gonsalvi; and I always intended them as a cadeau for Launceston's bride. But since he is to marry a daughter of Mr. Waddlestone, I might as well offer her a necklace of walnut-shells."

"But surely we had better defer our visit to Hancock's till a more convenient opportunity?" said Lady Rawleigh, who looked upon mosaics as much fitter for the Museum than the jewel-box, though unwilling to offend her aunt by declining so handsome a gift.

"No time like the present!" said her ladyship, bustling out of the carriage, and waiting anxiously on the stairs of the show-room, till she saw herself followed by her niece. In a moment, a tempting variety of beautiful settings was extended upon the counter for their choice, which Frederica, at first, modestly left to the determination of the donor. But in the course of the discussion upon filigree and Gothic, matted gold and embossed, she discovered that, although the mosaics were a gift from her aunt, her jeweller had been pointedly selected, that she might order the mounting at her own expense.

But her misfortunes did not end here. While determining the shape of the comb, which was to be surmounted with views of the Coliseum, of the temples of Poestum, and the amphitheatre of Verona (a portable abridgment of Piranesi), she heard the voice of Lord Calder, at the opposite counter, reprobating the delay of his order for a set of malachite-handled knives and forks, and felt that her project of excusing herself from attending his supper-party that night, on the plea of indisposition, was now out of the question. Even her momentary hope of escaping his lordship's notice in an area so contracted was lost, when Mrs. William Erskyne, flying up stairs, rushed noisily towards her.

"Fred., my dear love, I saw your carriage waiting, and am come to tell you that I have made a most delightful party for the races on Friday. I have engaged horses in your name and mine—only ten gunieas; and I know you are as rich as Rothschild. But why are you masquerading so early?"

"Hush! hush! I have been sitting for my picture. But do not let me detain you. I really cannot join your party on Friday. I will hereafter explain to you why."

"No, no; I want no explanations. I have made up my mi-

have you, and never allow myself to be disappointed. Good-bye! —Good morning, Mr. Hancock. What put it into your head to send in my bill? I have not the least idea of paying it."

" Whenever you please, madam," said the civil jeweller, too well accustomed to the caprice of fine ladies to be annoyed by her impertinence; while Lord Calder, advancing towards the discomfited Frederica, addressed the most gracious compliments to her upon the confession he had overheard respecting her portrait; and the assurance he received from her appearance not only that the picture would be taken at an auspicious moment, but that he might hope for the pleasure of her company at Calder House that night.

There remained no alternative but acquiescence; and having escaped from further observation by hastily terminating her commission, Frederica threw herself into a corner of the carriage, completely out of humour. From Lady Olivia, however, she received nothing but congratulations on Lord Calder's flattering demeanour. Her ladyship had long regarded with profound reverence his manifold virtues—from the power of granting Government franks, to the presidency over the most magnificent establishment in the three kingdoms. The merits of his Italian confectioner alone would have insured her unalterable respect.

But Frederica was neither born interested, nor had achieved interestenedness. Her mind was yet undegraded by those cares of vulgar life which sprang from the bills of many a Christmas; and, like certain baleful weeds, wind round and destroy the finer impulses of a noble nature. Reared in the lap of prosperity, she had scarcely come in contact with the words "income, allowance, expenditure, debt, credit, or creditor." Even the embarrassments of her brother were on too wholesale a scale to give her the slightest notion that a sovereign was composed of only twenty shillings. She knew that, between rich and poor, there existed an awful discrepancy. But of the facility with which the rich *become* poor, or the humiliations arising from pecuniary distress, she entertained only a vague conception. Even among the uneasy meditations of her easy chair, she very slightly reminded herself that she had expended eighty pounds on a horse, seventy on a fountain, a hundred on an opera-box, besides a considerable sum for the court-dress and the mosaic necklace; believing that four hundred pounds pin-money would not only handsomely cover the amount of these expenses and of the miniature, but would leave her, according to her mental calculations, a very satisfactory balance to fulfil her usual charities at Rawleighford.

Very different and far less consolatory were the reflections which kept the volume of "*Adèle de Sénanges*" unopened in her hand!

—Sir Brooke was gone,—gone for the first time,—gone with a veil of mutual dissatisfaction still unremoved between their affections ; —gone upon a contemptible errand of bribing his way into Parliament ; —gone with that hard ungainly mass of human insensibility, Mr. Lexley ; —gone nominally for four days, and virtually for as many more as might suit his truant fancy. And how was she about to beguile the period of his absence—his first absence—his confiding absence ? By joining a society she knew he must disapprove ; by visiting Calder House, for the first time, unsanctioned by the support of her husband. Twice she rose, and rushed to the writing-table to attempt an excuse. But what could she say in such an emergency ?—Another engagement was negatived by her acceptance of the invitation ; and pretended indisposition was rendered impossible by her morning's encounter. Already she foresaw the sneers of Mrs. William Erskyne, who had witnessed the engagement, and would readily detect the motive of its infringement. Already, she anticipated the reproaches of her aunt Tadcaster upon her indifference towards the maintenance of a good connexion in society. And when at length Mrs. Pasley proceeded to light the tapers on the dressing-table, Frederica threw aside her pen and Madame de Souza with an air of resignation becoming a martyr ; nor allowed one smile to irradiate her face when she beheld it surrounded with aërial curls, illuminated by the reflection of her diamond earrings, and enhanced by a robe whose satin folds would have rejoiced the courtly pencil of Vandyke.

There was just one shade of care lingering upon her brow, as she ascended the princely staircase at Calder House ; which, unlike the laboured decorations of a Mrs. Luttrell, assumed nothing more than its ordinary character of refined magnificence. It was neither divested with penurious housewifery of its Persian carpeting, nor embowered with temporary verdure—the antique statues gracing its niches were permanent, and the bronze lamps displaying their classic beauties, of nightly illumination. Frederica concluded that she had been preceded by the groom of the chambers ; for she was met in one of the first chambers of the suite by Lord Calder himself, who led her forward to the saloon in which his guests were assembled. For a moment she fancied that there was something rather too regal in the tone of his reception. But when he had placed her in the most advantageous position for hearing the concert about to commence, and stood beside her listening with deferential attention to her flattering comments, she began to think that if Lord Calder were almost as grandiose as Louis XIV., he was quite as courteous, and far more entertaining.

It is surprising in how short a time the weariness which had p

viously oppressed the spirits of Lady Rawleigh, subsided, under the influence of the thousand joyous sounds and sights by which she was now surrounded ; and her heart became as much the lighter from its previous despondency, as the sun shines with a clearer radiance after the dispersion of a morning mist. After the lapse of two short hours, she acknowledged to herself that, in spite of her former prejudices, she had never found herself surrounded by society so agreeable as that of Calder House. It is true she found none of her immediate friends included in its fastidious circle ; from which her mother would have been rejected as insipid, her brother as a boor, her husband as a nonentity, and her aunt Tadcaster as the most insupportable of human bores. But all its sitting members were of the choicest fashion ; women just hovering on the verge of indiscretion, without having forfeited their reputation ; and men incapable of uttering a word unworthy to be quoted, either for its eminent wit or miraculous absurdity. There was not a person in that matchless coterie, otherwise than superlatively gifted to conduce to the general gratification of eye or ear.

As soon as the distinguished notice bestowed by Lord Calder on Frederica had pointed her out to be deserving the homage of society, Lady Rawleigh found herself smothered in incense. But it is not with those fragrant fumes first circling around us that we discover the paltry nature of the tribute.—Intoxicated by its grateful vapour, we become satisfied at once of our own divinity, and of the laudable devotion of our votaries ; and time and experience alone render the unnatural atmosphere oppressive to our feelings. Lord Putney begged leave to present to her Mr. Vaux, the most fashionable wit of the day, who had long been ambitious of the honour of her acquaintance ; and poor Frederica ingenuously imagined that he had been attracted by the reputation of her talents. While Lady Rochester, by her eager request to her brother Lord Calder, for an introduction to "*beautiful* Lady Rawleigh," convinced her that all London was ringing with the fame of her charms.

Meanwhile the following dialogue was carried on at her expense on the opposite side of the room.

" My dear Vaux ! Who was that pretty creature whose vacant smiles you were trying to Pygmalionize into intelligence, just now ? "

" Oh ! my Galatea is by no means so marble as she appears. The wife of some booby Baronet,—some Warwickshire Squire,—who appears to have just sense enough to let her loose on society, without his stupid presence hung like a clog round her neck to keep her from ranging. Such people usually imagine that human beings

are expected to walk upon the earth in couples, like their own hounds; or like the varnished wooden effigies of Mr. and Mrs. Japhet, in a Dutch Noah's Ark."

"And how did you coax your statue off its pedestal?"

"I tell you 'tis no statue,—but a wood-nymph,—a Warwickshire hamadryad. As soon as I began to indulge her rustic predilections, and rhodomontade to her about sunrise and sunset, 'rapid Vaga,' and the Malvern hills, she talked as much poetry as would have furnished half-a-dozen very decent sonnets to the best Annual going. I expected every moment she would invite me to botanize with her in the Coliseum conservatories, or take a stroll in Kensington Gardens. But I gave her to understand *I was a classique* rather than a *romantique*; and that my rheumatism preferred a vapour-bath to all the fountains of Helicon."

"I thought her lovely face became over-clouded by a contumacious frown while you were uttering your impertinences."

"Wrong—quite wrong—believe me;—the dear little creature is far from malicious.—She swallowed Lady Rochester's civilities as eagerly as if they had been candied by Gunter."

"And what *could* Lady Rochester find to say to a sweet modest creature like that, on whom the glaring audacity of her wit must have been so completely thrown away? *She* has not the least notion how to talk to a woman; and when repeating like a parrot or a starling the phrases previously addressed to herself, sometimes produces the most singular samples of conversation!"

"Her business with Lady Rawleigh was neither to talk nor to listen. Did you not detect the motive which induced her to sail across the room?"

"Like a yacht at a regatta?—No indeed!—I saw her glass diligently applied to her eye."

"Poor soul!—She fancies that a woman's complexion is as ex-traneous as a man's coat; and on seeing a pretty person for the first time, instantly tries to detect whether her beauty be liquid or vegetable; bought at Lubin's, Delcroix's, or Atkinson's. I have no doubt she fancies she has found out my goddess's secret; and qualified herself to offer an exact copy of Lady Rawleigh."

"As like as a crimson dahlia to a damask rose!—Why cannot she paint after one of her own granddaughters?—Ah! I see the *débutante* has met with unqualified success.—Calder is taking her down to her carriage,—a thing I never saw him do to any one but the beautiful Duchess of Lancaster."

"I shall leave my name with her to-morrow, for I predict that she will make some stir among us. So much the better!—We were

sadly in want of a new planet in this old solar system of ours. I suspect that our fixed stars, such as Lady Rochester and Lady Waldington, Lady Blanche and the duchess, will be compelled to hide their diminished heads in total eclipse!"

CHAPTER XIII.

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

ON the following day, just as Frederica, after returning from Rochard's too late to change her dress and finish a letter to Sir Brooke in time for the post, had seated herself with hurried eagerness at her writing table, in the full costume of her sitting, Martin suddenly threw open the door of the drawing-room, and announced—"Lord Calder!"—The sapient Mr. Thomas had not chosen to conceive it possible that my lady's general fiat of exclusion could extend to that privileged mortal, who conducted her so familiarly to her carriage on the preceding night.

Frederica profiting by the leisurely pace at which she knew her dignified friend to be ascending the stairs, hastily exclaimed, "How stupid!—I have letters to write for the post, and desired I might on no account be interrupted;" and accordingly when the attentive butler had closed the door upon his mistress and her inopportune guest, he issued peremptory orders in the hall that "no person was to be admitted to my lady, on no account whatsoever." Now Thomas, who had lived with a sufficient variety of capricious fine ladies to perfect his education, saw nothing unusual or remarkable in the order, but proceeded to enforce it with so much exactness, that when Lord Launceston shortly afterwards knocked at the door—before which, Lord Calder's carriage and slumbering servants were leisurely drawn up—he was assured again and again, that Lady Rawleigh was "*not at home.*"

Casting a suspicious glance at the sombre chariot, which, although ungraced by a single emblazonment bespeaking the rank of its owner, was marked by the beauty of its horses, and the neatness of its appointments to belong to some person of consideration, to say nothing of the impudence of the footman, whose cane and left leg were dangling over the corner of the dark green hamμercloth with an air of defiance that plainly bespoke them to be appurtenances to an establishment of sixty or eighty thousand a-year—Lord Launceston inquired to whom that equipage belonged.

"Really can't say, my lord. But her ladyship is not at home to nobody."

"Lord Launceston replied to this piece of impertinence by jumping off his horse, throwing the bridle to his informant, and walking deliberately into the house and up stairs; when, lo! to his surprise and consternation, on entering the second drawing-room, he found his sister, at five o'clock in the day, robed in white satin with her arms and shoulders in the full exposure of an evening toilet; while Lord Calder, reposing in an opposite arm-chair, gazed upon her loveliness with ill-concealed admiration.

Unfortunately, Lord Launceston had just a sufficient club-acquaintance with Frederica's noble guest to render that introduction superfluous which might have disguised the embarrassment of the group; for the cold and even haughty bows which were exchanged between the gentlemen, tended only to heighten the blushes and vexation of Lady Rawleigh, on being discovered in so singular a predicament by her brother, during the absence of her husband.

"You may see by my dress that I have been following the fashion of all vain women, my dear Launceston," said she, attempting to laugh away her distress, "by sitting for my picture. But pray do not mention it to Rawleigh or mamma, for I intend that it should be an agreeable surprise."

"I should think it would probably be a *very* agreeable surprise to your husband," said Lord L., sarcastically. "I was not aware," bowing to Lord Calder, "that your lordship was a practitioner in the *fine arts*?"

"You do me too much honour, and greatly overrate my abilities," said his lordship, deciding from the loud voice and ungracious demeanour assumed by Lady Rawleigh's brother, that he was even a more uncouth savage than he appeared in the betting-stand at Ascot or Doncaster, or on the driving seat of his barouche. "I should indeed despair of conveying to others my vivid impression of Lady Rawleigh's countenance; and am therefore disinterested enough to rejoice that she has selected the pencil of Rochard to perpetuate its present aspect."

"Rochard?" said Lord Launceston with an expressive glance of inquiry towards his sister. "How long has this mysterious portrait been projected? I was at Rochard's myself a day or two ago, and did not hear a word of it."

"Oh, mysterious portraits are the order of the day," observed Frederica, resuming her spirit, when she perceived the unnecessary air of harshness and authority assumed by her brother—a harshness which her own blamelessness strongly induced her to resent; "and I am determined not to tell you a single word about *my* picture,

that I may ascertain whether I am as expert as yourself in keeping a secret."

"I never had a secret bad enough or good enough to be worth keeping," said Lord Launceston, with increasing asperity. "Mystery presupposes guilt. A crape over the face is enough in itself to proclaim the plunderer or the assassin."

Lord Calder, perceiving from the tone and emphasis of the intrusive Launceston, that his observations were intended to be personal, though—being ignorant of the suspicious negative his lordship had encountered at the door, he was wholly at a loss to what motive to attribute his intemperance of speech,—now attempted to change the character of the conversation, by generalizing this latter comment and flying off to the brigands of the south of Italy, and the obsolete highwaymen of Bagshot-heath. But notwithstanding the admirable humour with which he described his own traditional encounter with the celebrated Abershaw, while yet an infant lying on his lady-mother's knees, in the now family haunt of Park-lane,—notwithstanding his picturesque sketch of the manner in which the notorious band of Alzaretti deposited the murdered body of a Romagnese physician under the portico of the pope's palace on Monte-Cavallo towards the Strada Pia, during his residence in Rome—Lord Launceston was determined not to be entertained. He sat listlessly rolling up the hearth-rug with his boot, as if his thoughts were wandering a thousand miles off.

At length Lord Calder, unused to find himself unwelcome in any society, rose to take leave. As he bent his low obeisance of farewell to Frederica, he observed half interrogatively, "I shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-night at Almack's?" When, perceiving her brother's angry scrutiny fixed upon her movements, she answered with a gracious bow—"Certainly! and as I am to call for my friend Mrs. Erskyne, I shall probably be there earlier than usual."

"Is that your ordinary mode of making an assignation, Frederica?" inquired her brother, when Lord Calder quitted the room.

"Pray do not interrupt me just now with inquiries," said she flying to her writing; "or I shall be too late for the post. But sit down, and make me out a frank for Martwich."

"You had better not give me any such commission, or I may perhaps be tempted to insert a postscript in the envelope, recommending Rawleigh to return without delay, and intercept the interviews between his wife and a fashionable libertine."

* It must be borne in mind that this novel was first published two-and-twenty years ago.

"Do, if you like. He will be delighted to find me grown so popular. But make haste, for I hear the last bell——"

Lord Launceston took the letter from her hands, and directed it with a gesture of impatience.

"I think I shall go to Almack's myself to-night," said he.

"By all means!" cried his sister. "You have not been there this season. But how will you tear yourself from Waddlestone House?"

"I was there last night."

"And how will they get on in Charles-street without you?"

"I shall remain with my mother till ten. After which, I shall devote myself to watching over the welfare of a sister whom I once believed superior to the necessity for any vigilance of mine."

"My welfare will be very ill protected unless you hasten down to King-street, to look after a spare ticket. The patroneases are seldom there after five o'clock; and among them, you will not be permitted to assume the hectoring airs which the affection of your sister induces her to pardon when exhibited towards herself."

Lord Launceston, who had been looking at his watch during the earlier part of this apostrophe, was half-way down stairs ere it was concluded; and had alighted at Willis's before Frederica dried the flood of tears with which her vexation relieved itself after his departure. She had lived two-and-twenty years in the closest intimacy of sisterly affection with her brother William, and he had never breathed a syllable of reproof to her before. But since his intimacy with that forward and impertinent Miss Elbany, Lord Launceston's manners and conversation had become strangely unprepossessing. She consoled herself with the hope that her brother would find the conclave in King-street completely broken up; and that he would be prevented, by the impossibility of procuring a ticket, from rendering her evening as unsatisfactory as her morning.

Among the incidents and passions influencing the variabilities of woman's humour, few are more potent, yet more indignantly disavowed, than the love of finery. From the moment a girl becomes conscious of the difference between sky-blue and rose-colour, it is astonishing what wonders can be wrought in the temper of her mind, and mood of her feelings, by the acquisition of a new dress, or the sight of some particular friend's Parisian bonnet. There scarcely exists a woman wise or virtuous enough to be insensible to the change produced in her appearance by variation of attire. Goldsmith knew more of womankind than they know of themselves, when he made Dr. Primrose declare that a set of new ribbons sufficed to metamorphose his philosophical daughter Sophia into coquette!

Lady Rawleigh, saddened by her husband's absence and vexed by the *contretemps* of the morning, entered her dressing-room at night to prepare for Almack's, with a mien of sober wisdom such as might have become Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, and formed an edifying frontispiece to her translation of Epictetus. But when, on opening the door, a bevy of female domestics took flight like a covey of partridges through the opposite entrance, to whom Mrs. Pasley had been displaying "my lady's court-dress, and my lady's sumptuous plume,"—and Frederica, through the door of the open wardrobe, caught a glimpse of the splendours which were to enhance her appearance on the morrow, she crossed the room with a lighter step; and a regret arose in her bosom, that Sir Brooke's absence and her mother's indisposition would deprive her of the support of their presence, and themselves of the gratification of witnessing her triumph. For triumph it must be—or her second glance at the glistening satin and waving feathers strangely deceived her. In defiance of her previous intentions, she even complied with Pasley's request that she would wear her set of turquoises at the ball, in order that her diamonds might be free from a particle of dust for the drawing-room.

To own the truth, the "three-piled hyperbole" of the lady's maid that my lady was in too good looks to need the "forrun haid of hornament," was rather less figurative than many of Mrs. Pasley's suggestions. Flushed by the flurry of her spirits, Frederica's eyes were irradiated with the unnatural brilliancy which a heightened complexion imparts. Scarcey had she entered the ball-room at Willis's, when Mrs. Erskyne spitefully whispered in her ear, "My dear Fred., you must have certainly rubbed your face against one of the red morocco library chairs, or Sir Brooke's yeomanry uniform, or your rouge is full three shades too deep!" An observation which deepened the bloom of Lady Rawleigh's cheeks three shades more; while Lady Rochester, no longer solicitous to decompose so exaggerated a complexion, shook her head, and complained aloud that the true French pink had never been worn by an English-woman since the days of the beautiful Lady Coventry; that even Lord Calder's new Venus did not find herself at all times sufficiently fair to venture upon rouge of real delicacy.

Delicate or indelicate, the augmented brilliancy of Frederica's complexion was received with universal applause; and while she advanced, side by side with Mrs. William Erskyne, indiscreetly escorted by a single admirer, *she* found herself followed by half-a-dozen; by Sir Robert Morse, buzzing his indiscriminate flatteries with the drone of a bluebottle fly; Lord Putney, occasionally reeking forth into some bitter sarcasm, intended to brand him

with the reputation of romantic misanthropy ; Colonel Rhyse, unconsciously tendering to her acceptance some of those cut-and-dried sentences which he had bestowed upon the successive beauties of that ball-room (Miss Rawdon among the number) for the last fifteen years ; a young Guardsman, galoppe-mad, tormenting her to augment the list of unhappy females whom his awkwardness had assisted to extend upon the slippery boards ; and Lord George Madrigal, the Bayley of the aristocracy, whose witticisms are unfortunately borrowed from the most approved authorities, and whose poetry, still more unfortunately, is unquestionably original ; a young gentleman personifying, according to his own lisping *pwonunthiathon*,

The eethpectanthy and wothe of the fair thate !

It was the first time Lady Rawleigh had appeared in public without her husband ; and she was astonished to find that, in her independent position of matron, she was a thousand times more in want of the sanction of her own sex, than she had ever been as Frederica Rawdon. A ball-room is the natural element of youth—the becoming sphere of an unmarried girl. But a young wife seems to need some excuse for her presence there, unsupported by her husband's company. She is rejected from the sofas of the elderly chaperons, who regard her as an interloper, and suspend in her presence their mutual inquiries into the extent of young Lord Priory's rent-roll. The young ladies shrink from her with the briefest possible replies to her observations and civilities, in order that they may resume their private flirtations and partner-hunts. And, unless by joining in the dance she choose to avoid the perils of isolation, it passes into a general opinion that *she is there to flirt, and to be flirted with.*

Very soon after Lady Rawleigh's entrance, she found herself deserted by Mrs. Erskyne, who went off to waltz, and to repose herself afterwards in one of the least ostensible corners of the tea-room ; and, unwilling to linger near the ropes with the homage of so extensive a group devoted to herself, she accepted the arm of Sir Robert Morse, her oldest and least attractive acquaintance among them, and retired to an upper sofa, on which her intimate friends and country-neighbours, Lady Lawford and Lady Huntingfield, were seated in rigid chaperonship ; with fan in hand and glassy eyes fixed upon their several daughters. But, to her great embarrassment, she found herself treated with a degree of polite reserve, indicating that they regarded her as twenty years too young for the station she had chosen. How could Lady Lawfor^d continue in her presence her narrative of the extremely un-

some conduct pursued by Lord Putney towards her niece Araminta, the preceding summer, at Ryde; when his lordship's friend, Sir Brooke Rawleigh's pretty wife, might acquaint him with every word that proceeded from her lips? Or how could Lady Huntingfield inquire of Lady Lawford whether the estates of Lord Offaley (the father of Colonel Rhyse, who was dancing with her daughter, Lady Margaret Fieldham) were likely to come round, when the affairs of Lord Launceston were so notoriously implicated in the same embarrassment?

It was in vain that Frederica, with her characteristic gentleness, attempted to engage them in conversation. Their monosyllabic replies plainly expressed—"As Sir Brooke is borough-mongering at Martwich, you certainly did not take the trouble to dress and come to Almack's for the purpose of twaddling with two respectable middle-aged females, who are here on business, with their daughters. *Do* flirt with that foolish boy who is sighing his adoration at your side, and leave us alone."

The former part of the hint poor Frederica was, in common courtesy, compelled to accept; for she found that it would be as easy to extract conversation from the posts of the orchestra as from the two chaperons, who seemed as mutually engrossed as the partners of a banking-house on their annual settling day. But when, without adopting the latter clause, she was obliged to accept the tediousness so liberally bestowed on her by Sir Robert Morse, she soon found him encouraged by her graciousness to mingle more gallantry in his humdrum discourse than suited her taste or amended the awkwardness of her position.

The room being now crowded by the confusion following the termination of a quadrille, she seized the opportunity to affect an eager search after her friend Louisa. And as she was about to enter the crowd, followed by Sir Robert Morse with the offer of his arm and an assurance that Mrs. Erskyne was by no means in want of her chaperonage, she noticed the stately figure of Lord Calder, stationed in prominent dignity near the door, where he was enduring, with courteous patience, one of the most confused and elaborate pieces of scandal which ever slid from the polished lips of Lady Barbara Dynley—one of those factitious romances of fashionable life, which are as sportively narrated in the ball-room or opera-box as if they were not capable of originating half-a-dozen duels, a criminal trial or two, a suicide, a divorce, and the ruin of more than one family of respectability.

From such a penance Lord Calder turned with unqualified delight perceiving the beautiful Frederica, in more than all her usual eliness; nor can it be concealed that when Lady Rawleigh

found herself, a few minutes afterwards, seated in the embrasure of a window, with his lordship's conversational powers exerted for her amusement, she thought of her escape from Sir Robert Morse with triumph, and of her absence from her lord and master—not at all.

The vocation of libertinism is usually adopted with such presumptuous vanity,—it is so much the custom for men to believe that it requires only an exertion of their own will to become dangerous to the feebler sex,—that the character of a roué is vulgarly considered to belong—like the profession of arms—to any fool of fashion anxious to make it his own. But libertinism of the higher order, which affects only dangerous and difficult conquests, requires nearly as much talent and tact, as to become a secretary of state. Lord Calder was in the habit of exerting as much diplomacy to extend and maintain his dominions in the female world, as would have sufficed for the adjustment of a barrier treaty, or effected a revolution in the international law of half-a-dozen continental states.

It is astonishing by what a singular exertion of verbal and moral influence he contrived, in half an hour's conversation, to place Lady Rawleigh completely at ease both with him and herself. Sir Robert Morse, in attempting to travel a similar road, had arrived at a very different conclusion. *His* homage, tender as it was, implied to Frederica that her unprotected situation rendered it her cue to receive his attentions with graciousness and gratitude. But Lord Calder exhibited *his* tactics by teaching her to fancy that she reigned in his estimation as the queen of the ball-room; that *he* believed the whole assembly engrossed by her beauty; and that her notice of an individual so obscure and uninfluential as himself, could proceed only from the unlimited benevolence of her disposition. He was well aware of the advantage to be derived from rendering the interview unexceptionably calm, satisfactory, and gratifying to her feelings. He wished no unpleasing association to connect itself with his friendship in her mind. He trusted that his manœuvres would soon afford as species of habitual repose to their intercourse; that they should shortly belong to each other amid the tumult of society, by the same negative attraction which united the drunken cavalier and his horse, when all his companions had mounted their steeds and ridden away.

" You are going to the drawing-room to-morrow," said he. " Shall you not be annoyed by making your first appearance there without your husband's attendance ?

" I shall, indeed ! " replied Frederica, " and I have been very anxious to postpone my presentation. But a drawing-room is n

of such rare occurrence, and Rawleigh has insisted so much on my profiting by my preparations for this disagreeable ceremony, that I am obliged to persist in my original plan."

"Oh! if your dress is complete, I have not a word to say on the subject. I am aware that the eloquence of a becoming costume is all-convincing; nay, that many marriages have been preserved from a rupture, merely because the wedding-clothes were sent home. But who presents you?"—

"Lady Derenzy, a cousin of Sir Brooke's."

"Quite right, my dear Lady Rawleigh; you could not have chosen better;—a woman who has totally outlived her fashion, influence, and importance, but of the highest respectability;—exactly calculated to be the Mentor of a young woman entering into life."

Regarding Lord Calder as almost paternal in the tone of his counsels, Lady Rawleigh listened with avidity to the suggestions of a man so experienced in the customs and opinions of the great world; when, just as she was leaning across the window, with her long throat bent gracefully towards him, and her beautiful face irradiated by a smile of gratitude for his interest in her favour, she was suddenly struck by the countenance of Lord Launceston, fixed in angry scrutiny on her solitary interview with one of the most dangerous and dissipated members of fashionable society!—

Involuntarily Frederica started, and turned pale.

CHAPTER XIV.

Then 'gan the courtiers gaze on every side,
And stare on him with big looks, bason-wide:
Wondering what mister wight he was, *and whence*;
For he was clad in strange accoustrements,
Fashioned with quaint devices, never seen
In court before,—though there all fashions bin;
Yet he them in newfangledness did pass.

CHAUCER'S "MOTHER HUBBERD'S TALE."

"THE best method of avoiding danger," said a celebrated Hibernian orator, "is to meet it plump!"—and the best mode of evading a quarrel is sometimes by striking the first blow. Lady Rawleigh having accordingly resolved to forestal the expression of her brother's displeasure, beckoned him towards the window with a smile of the most confiding innocence.

"My dearest Launceston! What do you mean by skulking at ^{the} extremity of the room, like a chidden spaniel? Notwithstand-

ing your anxiety to be here to-night, I never saw you appear so little at ease."

"Nor *you*, my dear Lady Rawleigh, so much;—let us make a fairer and more becoming division of the family assurance," whispered Lord Launceston, with a severe glance at her companion. Then, appearing to repent his severity, he added "I am here with another man's ticket. The lists of the patronesses to whom I applied were full. But I had no difficulty in persuading young Brancepeth that he was extremely indisposed, and might safely resign his ticket into my hands: and with the assistance of a bad cough and cambric handkerchief, I contrived that Willis should mistake me for a man with a face freckled like a Lincolnshire frog, red hair, and a snub nose. But I am far more apprehensive of encountering my kind friend, Lady—, who made some inquiries for me among her sister patronesses, and will naturally be anxious to ascertain how I became more successful than herself. In *some* things women are not so easily deceived."

"After your recent compliments to my confidence," said Frederica, rising good-humouredly from her seat, to the surprise of her brother and the vexation of Lord Calder, "you cannot presume to undervalue my countenance. Give me your arm, and I will not only venture to confront the awful conclave, but bear you blameless through their inquisitions."

Leaning upon her brother, and restored to a proper sense of her own dignity by the support of a person privileged to be her companion, Lady Rawleigh ventured amid the most fastidious of the brilliant groups from which she had hastily retreated on the desertion of Mrs. Erskyne; and even Lord Launceston forgot his previous irritation, in the gratified pride with which he observed the admiration commanded by the graceful elegance of his sister. Frederica was sure to please,—sure to receive a favourable award from the severe jurors of society; for she formed no pretensions which could jar with the interests of any other person. Her female friends advanced to greet her without the fear of rivalship; and the male idlers of the ball-room were satisfied that she sought no partner, no boa-carrier, no carriage-caller, from among their well-drilled ranks.

As they quitted a little knot of friends distinguished equally by rank, fashion, opulence, and those talents of society which are necessary to uphold the distinction even of these threefold advantages, Lady Rawleigh inquired in a whisper of her brother how he should feel in appearing at Almack's with the future Lady Launceston?

"My Leonora is too reasonable to be ambitious of mingling in this gaudy throng," said he, apparently more amused than vexed

by the query. "Neither she nor I approve of defying either night air or the breath of scandal."

"My dear Launceston, you seem to have acquired mamma's apprehensions of catching cold! But since you are so considerate of health and reputation, will you not, in Rawleigh's absence, consent to accompany me to-morrow to the drawing-room?"

"I have no court-dress ready; and I detest drawing-rooms."

"You have your yeomanry uniform, and my commands to wear it. Nay!—do not refuse me. I have been earnestly in hopes of Rawleigh's return; and it would be highly disagreeable to me to find myself dependent on Lady Derenzy."

"And still more so to me to find you exposed to the protection of Lord Calder. Well!—since you require my attendance, Fred., I am bound to devote myself to your service. But I own I have very little taste for the toil and tinsel of these exhibitions."

Taking him at his word, Lady Rawleigh hastened to retire from the ball-room; and on the following morning, despatched the carriage to bring him to Bruton-street, while she was enduring the severe strictures of Mrs. Pasley's hooks and eyes, and the still severer ones of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's eyes and criticisms. Her ladyship was indignant that any coiffeur but Marshall should presume to plume himself on distributing the plumage of a court head; and little less so, that any niece of hers should venture to present herself, or be presented at St. James's, without the preparation of a course of curtseying from Olivier. "She remembered that she had been under the tutorage of the celebrated Rose—(minuet Rose)—six weeks previous to her own *début*. She recollects that no young lady of her time ever dreamed of appearing even at the old Duchess of Cumberland's without a similar kind of training. She hoped and trusted that Lady Rawleigh would not disgrace the lappets she wore by any dereliction from the habits of an ancient and honourable family."

"My dearest aunt," said Frederica, with a smile such as that ancient and honourable family had rarely displayed among all its generations of dimples, while Pasley clasped on the diamond necklace which completed her splendid costume, "believe me, Marshall and minuets are as obsolete as Maréchal powder. You might quite as reasonably require me to appear in a hoop, or Launceston in red-heeled pumps."

"Well, my dear—you will hear your mother's opinion on the subject. As her rheumatism would not permit her to assist at your toilet, where I undertook to replace her superintendence, I have promised to take you to Charles-street. She is naturally anxious that Miss Elbany should see you."

To exhibit herself for the amusement of Lady Launceston's presumptuous companion, was a provoking trial to Frederica. But she felt the impossibility of refusing a request urged in her mother's name; an act of conciliation for which she was rewarded on her arrival, by Miss Elbany's observation that "the English custom of wearing plumes with a French train, produced a species of mermaid anomaly; and that diamonds had a miserable effect by daylight—nothing could be less becoming."

Slight as was the value attached by Frederica to the judgment of such a person, all the self-content with which she had contemplated her own figure in the large swing-glass of her dressing-room, vanished at once on hearing a sentence of condemnation so coolly pronounced on her appearance. But the flush of indignation which rose to her cheek only tended to enhance her beauty. Astonishing the effect that can be produced upon the female mind by a single disparaging comment. The charming Duchess of Devonshire was not more elated by the compliment of the dustman, who demanded a spark from her grace's eyes to light his pipe, than poor Lady Rawleigh was depressed by the sneer of the despised Miss Elbany. But alas! the mortifications of the day were destined to assume a still more vexatious character.

Lady Derenzy, the great lady of the Rawleigh family, who had undertaken the office of ushering its new niece into the world, was one of those cold, hard, worldly women, who regard the gentle tenderness of Nature as the portion of peasants and paupers, yet disdain the influence of fashion as being equally the dowry of parvenus and provincial aspirants. Her ladyship's notions had stopped short in their progress with the close of the eighteenth century. She still believed Edwin to be the only comic actor on the stage; had not done wondering at Delpini's dexterity; acknowledged her preference for Rauzzini—her adherence to Arne; maintained that no public amusement would ever rival the attractions of Ranelagh, no private one the readings of Texier. She was aware indeed that a few trivial changes had been introduced into the march of modern existence, that such toys as steam-vessels and Congreve rockets had been forced upon public adoption. But she cherished a visionary notion that the good old times would one day return; that people would once more sail to Calais, in order to visit Paris, and be powder-puffed by a *friseur* of the Faubourg St. Germain, and that her grand nephews from White's and the Travellers', would live to kneel and crave her blessing in suits of pea-green lustring or rose-coloured plush; and, having settled herself during the reign of Strawberry Horace, in a repertorium of old China, enamels, and lap-dogs, at Twickenham, rarely visited the metropolis, excepting

on important public occasions, such as the accession of a new sovereign; or important private ones, such as the marriage or death of some member of the Rawleigh or Derenzy families. She had been highly gratified by the union of her favourite nephew with a niece of Lady Olivia Tadcaster, whom she had regarded for the last forty years as a very estimable young woman; and, being in the habit of what she was pleased to term, "paying her duty to their majesties" every ten or fifteen years—terrifying the modern generation by the apparent resuscitation of a mummy—she rather courted the task of sponsorship to the new lady of Rawleighford.

It had been previously arranged that Lady Rawleigh's carriage should follow that of her antediluvian kinswoman; and when, on the reunion of the two ladies in the entrance hall at St. James's, Lady Derenzy perceived that Frederica had secured the protection of her brother as their escort, her ladyship launched a grim smile of approbation on the person of the handsome Launceston; whose yeomanry-cavalry trappings she mistook for those of the 7th Hussars, and whose figure she involuntarily compared with those of St. Leger and Boothby, the irresistibles of her own day of beauty.

It was amusing to observe the air of maternal protection assumed by this ancient lady towards many of her acquaintance among the grisly dowagers; who, being ten years her juniors, she regarded as young creatures, requiring her chaperonage as much as when it first ushered them into the coteries of the Marchioness of Rockingham, or the old Princess Amelia. In many a withered fold and wrinkle, Lady Derenzy still beheld its original dimple; and saw nothing but the glossiness of their long-lost tresses, in the frizzed toupees of many a faded brow.—The immobility of rheumatic joints *she* mistook for an air of languor, and the trembling of palsied heads for the mincing of coquetry. Whenever Frederica could disengage her attention from the assiduities of which she was the object, and the affectionate greetings of various branches of her extensive family, she could not but over-hear snatches of the singular colloquies which arose between her venerable companion and her superannuated contemporaries. And as she listened to their croakings, she thought of the three awful "cummer" assembled on the grave stones of Ravenswood church, in the tale of the Bride of Lammermuir.

"Saw you ever a more crowded drawing-room?" whispered Countess Ronthorst to the Dowager Duchess of Trimblestown.

"Crowded—umph!" mumbled her grace, with a scowl that gleamed beneath her shaggy brows like the glittering eyes of a wild animal in the depths of some cave overhung with brambles. Rowded like the hustings at Covent Garden, and almost as

noisy.—People admitted who would be rejected from the long parlour at the Easter dinner. It was not so in the Queen's time. It all arises from the want of female presidency.—Faugh!"

"How haggard Lady Rochester is beginning to look!" whispered Lady Lavinia Lisle, to Countess Ronthorst. "Between ourselves, she has had repeated paralytic warnings, from the effects of the white lead with which she has been stuccoing her face for the last twenty years."

"Say rather from the effects of the Elixir de Garus with which she has been poisoning her system for the last ten. Women who begin at twenty to take Eau de Cologne dropped on sugar, whenever they feel out of spirits, are seldom *out* of spirits, at fifty-five," observed Lady Derenzy, joining the scandalous parliament.

"O fie!" said Lady Lavinia, affecting girlish incredulity, yet refraining from any vivacious demonstrations, lest she should unsettle the factitious tresses which adorned her brow.—"One should not even know of such things!"

"Pooh, child!" said Lady Derenzy, who regarded this semi-centurian as a giddy young creature, "I tell you *I* have seen that woman so stupefied with laudanum, after an execution—"

"Oh! horrible!"

"—in her house,—or the desertion of a lover, that you might have shut her hand in the door without her perceiving it."

"The errors of Lady Rochester are at least respectable," grumbled the old duchess, looking over her fierce aquiline nose on certain plebeian intruders of the lappeted mob around her. "No one has more strictly preserved the dignity of her rank in life.—The first admirer for whom she forfeited her reputation, was royal; and as to *all* the rest"—

"A very comprehensive word, my dear duchess!" said Countess Ronthorst, spitefully.

"I do not believe she has ever strayed out of the peerage."

"What creatures one sees here, now-a-days!" said Lady Derenzy. "Yonder gaunt looking woman, bristled like the crest of William de la Mark and covered with jewels, is the daughter of Lord Waldinghurst's steward."

"But with your ladyship's permission, if I may venture an opinion on a point where your ladyship is in all probability so very much better informed," said Lord Twadell,—emphasizing with his well-powdered head, till the white particles flew in all directions, and the duchess's velvet appeared to have taken multure in kind from his floury abundance,—"that lady is *now* the much respected wife of one of our most eminent law-lords."

"Law-lords!—Birmingham nobility!" cried Countess Ronthorst,

the naturalized widow of a former Austrian Ambassador, whose quarterings would have agonized Sir Isaac Heard, and required all the skill of the Ratisbon College to emblazon. "I do not see why the Courts of Chancery and Common Pleas should serve as ante-chambers to the Court of St. James's!"

"I saw my chaplain and my physician bowing to each other on the stairs," said Lady Derenzy, "like two rooks nodding their heads in a ploughed field."

"The learned professions, ladies,—the learned *professions*," mouthed Lord Twadell, "form a distinct class of the community, commanding the respect of enlightened persons of—all—of—of—all—classes of the community."

"There ought to be a Pick's-wall built up to defend us against incursions of such hordes of barbarians," said the duchess, with a dry, short, hectic-cough, indicating that the armorial honours of the escutcheon on which she prided herself would shortly adorn a hatchment over the lofty portals of Trimblestown House!—"I would sooner see every descendant of my house stretched in their grave, than disgraced by a commercial alliance. It is the pride of my life that not one of my daughters was allowed to marry below an earldom."

Poor Lady Lavinia uttered a soft sentimental sigh in honour of four contemporary martyrs, whom she had seen dragooned to the altar by her grace's maternal severity. But all four were now released from their connubial thraldrom;—two by death,—and two by Doctors' Commons!

"One can scarcely wonder that young men of susceptible temperament, let their rank in life be what it may," said Lord Twadell, elegically, "should forget the claims of ancestry in favour of a creature so divine as yonder young lady in the white robe. Yet I am credibly informed that her father is a *soap-boiler*!"

"A soap-boiler?" cried the duchess, feeling for her salts.

"Of the celebrated firm of Waddlestone and Co.," said Lord Twadell, closing his snuff-box with a jerk of disdain,

Upon the original mention of a name so disagreeably associated as that of Waddlestone, Lady Rawleigh involuntarily retreated behind the skirts of the most expansive dowager of the group; while Lord Launceston, who was engaged in conversation with the young Duke of Draxfield, implied by a glance towards the green and gold rotundity of Mrs. Waddlestone's person (who was struggling towards the great staircase, looking the image of a colossal Cantelupe melon), and by a significant smile at the retreating movements of his sister, that he was aware of the vicinity of his future kindred without being much more solicitous than herself to attract their

notice. They were soon, however, put out of their pain. Dazzled by the splendid spectacle which presented itself for the first time to her eyes, Mrs. Waddlestone was too much occupied with the management of her train, and the management of her daughter's courage, to recognise her passive cavalier. She passed and made no sign!

"Thank Heaven!" secretly exclaimed Frederica, "that I have escaped that dreadful woman! Lady Derenzy would have undergone a fit of apoplexy on the spot, on detecting my brother's intimacy with such a family. I have at least the consolation of knowing that she will never pass the lodges at Rawleighford, after the solemnization of Launceston's marriage!"

After a tedious ascent of the crowded stairs, and a lingering progress through the ante-chambers, in the course of which Lady Derenzy's chin grew more and more elevated, till it appeared a copy of Malvolio's supercilious countenance, they reached the threshold of the royal presence; when her ladyship, turning to Frederica with a "Now, my dear, your train," in anticipation of the interference of the page in waiting, started with a glare of horror on perceiving that Mrs. Waddlestone was familiarly addressing the brother of the lady whose presentation she had undertaken. She had some difficulty in believing the evidence of her eyes, seldom so inconveniently emancipated from their almost co-existent spectacles. But a slight delay at the door of the presence-chamber served to convey the following sentences to her paralyzed ears.

"La! my dear Launceston! Was ever anything so lucky as this *rencontre*! Such disasters!—I have been in a peck of troubles; but thank goodness, all's right again. You know we *was* to have been presented by the Lady Mayoress. But somehow, we have missed her in this tremendous crowd; and I was afraid we should have to put up with a lady in waiting, which never looks well in the papers. 'Mrs. Waddlestone and daughter, by the lady in waiting,' would have been all nohow, as one may say, for people of our fortune. Even the king would have thought it odd."

An irrepressible titter among the accidental auditors of this ill-timed explanation, sounded in the ears of Lady Derenzy like the hissing of all the serpents of all the Furies.

"When Lord Launceston has terminated his conversation with—that person,"—she began, haughtily addressing herself to Frederica, who, with crimsoned cheeks, was taking refuge from her shame in a hurried dialogue with Lord Calder, and would neither hear Mrs. Waddlestone's recapitulation of her miseries nor notice Lady Derenzy's indignation.

"When I spied you out, my dear Launceston," continued Mrs.

Waddlestone, unconscious of the consternation she was exciting, " says I to Leo, ' Well, my love, after all, things will turn out for the best. *Après la pluie, le beau temps.* Here is Launceston, who will easily find us out some one to present us among his fine friends, or fine friends are not good for much ;' and says she"—

" Will your ladyship proceed ?" inquired Lady Derenzy of Frederica, in an attitude of refrigeration that might have been borrowed from Michael Angelo's statue of snow. But, alas ! even had Lady Rawleigh's attention been alienable from the discourse of Lord Calder, the appeal must have been unavailing. The presence-chamber was not yet attainable by a new supply of aspirants. The whole group remained as incapable of locomotion, as if enclosed in the Black Hole of Calcutta.

But though Frederica turned an equally deaf ear to the atrocities of Mrs. Waddlestone, and the indignation of Lady Derenzy, she could not affect an act of ungraciousness towards her brother. Notwithstanding his predilection for Miss Elbany, and his animosity towards her friend Lord Calder, her gentle heart could not cherish an unkind feeling towards him. No sooner did she hear the words, " My dear Frederica !" whispered behind her, than she suspended her conversation to listen to a request framed by Lord Launceston in the most pathetic terms.

" My dear Fred. !—I am persuaded you are too good-natured to refuse a request of mine. Mrs. Waddlestone has been so unfortunate as to be separated from her friend the Lady Mayoress. Will you oblige me by undertaking to present her and Leonora ?—Do, my dear sister," he added in a lower voice, " it is important to me to keep on a good footing with this woman."

" Lady Rawleigh !" again ejaculated Lady Derenzy, with a hollow voice that sounded almost like the " Swear !" of the Danish spectre.

Advancing a few steps, Frederica now whispered a word or two in the ear of Sir Brooke's dictatorial kinswoman, which appeared to communicate some rabid contagion. Her countenance became distorted by suppressed fury. But alas ! on turning a second time towards her brother, Lady Rawleigh caught sight, in the rear of the Cantelupe, of a pair of lips quivering with very different emotions. The gentle, timid Leonora was gifted with far too delicate a sensibility not to perceive the exact state of feeling excited around her by the familiarity of her mother. Her refinement of mind revealed to her that they were the objects of contempt and avoidance. She saw, however, that retreat was now impossible,—that they must pursue the unwelcome ceremony to an end : and could scarcely restrain her tears on perceiving the embarrassment of Lord

Launceston,—the reluctance of his sister,—the excitement of Lady Derenzy,—the dignified disdain of Lord Calder,—and the astonishment of every individual within sight and hearing of the scene.

No sooner did Lady Rawleigh observe the expressive emotion of the graceful and interesting Leonora, than her recollections glanced to their interview in the gardens of Waddlestone House, when she had bestowed the encouraging notice of its heiress on the supposed dependent of poor Mrs. Martha Derenzy. Without further hesitation,—defying at once the astonishment of Lord Calder and the horror of Lady Derenzy,—she accepted her brother's proposal of an introduction to the Waddlestones, and the introduction of the Waddlestones; and executing a profound curtsey to the globose mass of green and gold, and a kindly one to her daughter,—she followed her shuddering aunt into the blue chamber!—

CHAPTER XV.

The one coach was green, the other was blue; and not the green and blue chariots in the Circus of Rome or Constantinople excited more turmoil among the citizens, than the double apparition occasioned in the mind of the Lord-Keeper.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

It was not till Lady Rawleigh reached her own dressing-room, resigned her temporary splendours to their bandboxes, and her weary frame to an arm-chair, that she could recall to mind the thousand and one aggravations of her unpleasant morning. She was now beyond reach of the cordial thanks with which Lord Launceston had attempted to repay the sacrifice exacted by his sordid speculations; beyond reach of the grateful smile with which Leonora had raised her soft eyes towards her. In her mental revision of the scene, she saw only the affectedly candid air of Lady Lotus, the sparkling of Mrs. William Erakyne's venomous eyes, Lord Calder's look of grave commiseration, and Lord Putney's distant bow of contemptuous disavowal. Willingly would she have beheld the Cantelupe melon cut into as many quarterings as ever graced the escutcheon of Countess Ronthorst!

While she was still absorbed in the vexatious reminiscences, Lady Olivia, who had been describing an orbit in the parish of St. James to catch a glimpse of the plumes and state wigs of her friends, bustled in, to learn the news of the day.

"Has it been a good drawing-room, my dear? Many of the royal family? Many diamonds? Many foreign ambassadors? Many domestic oddities?—But you are out of sorts, my dear Fred," said her ladyship, interrupting herself, and drawing

chair towards that of her niece. "What *has* happened? Have you lost any of your jewels in the crowd?"

Frederica briefly recapitulated her story, which, to her infinite indignation, was very cavalierly treated by Lady Olivia.

"Nonsense! nonsense!" she cried. "Lady Derenzy has been existing all her life in an atmosphere that magnifies the objects surrounding her. But tell me, my dear child,—for I have an ulterior object in this little visit,—did you observe any one with the Austrian ambassadress this morning?"

"Her daughter looked almost as distinguished as herself."

"No, no! a stranger."

"The Princess of Anhalt-Haagenstein, and Countess Rodenfels, whom she presented."

"No!—a *stranger*; a person you never saw before?"

"Certainly not? I stood near them for some time."

"I really cannot make it all out?"

"What *all*, my dear aunt?"

"Why, you see, Fred., it is a very disagreeable subject to talk about; but the facts are simply these. You may recollect that I mentioned to you a charming encounter I made in the steamboat on the Rhine, with a noble Bohemian family. Delightful people! —unable to speak a syllable of either English or French. As I had not much difficulty in rubbing up my German, we got on charmingly together. They dined with *me* at Bingen, and I supped with *them* at Bonn. After which, we lived incessantly together through Holland, till my arrival at Dover."

"And what brought them to England?"

"Ay! there's the rub! They told me they were coming on a visit to Lord Vilz; and though I was persuaded that no such name was to be found in the peerage, I made allowances for defect of pronunciation. I am sure I had difficulty enough in conquering *their* title of Czartobarlozkna. Well, my dear, I made no scruple of recommending my friends to Fenton's hotel, where I conveyed them in my own carriage, because, having navigated their way by the Danube and the Rhine to England, they brought of course no species of travelling equipage."

"Very considerate of you, my dear aunt."

"The day after my arrival I took them to the Austrian embassy, where I did not get-out, because *there* at least they could explain themselves in their own language, and I happened to have two or three cards to leave in Portland-place. They told me, on our return, that the princess had promised to give an assembly expressly to introduce them to the London world."

"But *you* made a party for them to Richmond, if I recollect?"

"I did indeed ; and I fear rather prematurely. For though I have been too much occupied since my arrival in town with the arrangement of my house and the reorganization of my visiting list, to make all the inquiries concerning my friends and *their* friend, Lord Vilz, that might have been desirable, it has certainly struck me as strange that one heard nothing of them in society."

"Very true. Foreigners of real distinction are of such very rapid currency."

"Yesterday, I wrote my friend Countess Czartobarlozkna a little note,—for one cannot so well make this sort of delicate inquiry verbally,—asking her explicitly whether I should meet her at the ambassador's next week ; to which she replied—(and her German idiom so involves the fact that I cannot exactly determine the meaning of her phrase)—that *this* day was appointed for their first appearance in public."

"At the drawing-room, of course?"

"So I thought. But as you assure me that no stranger accompanied the princess, my mind misgives me ; more especially—I hardly like to mention what may be merely a conjectural coincidence,—more especially as a set of Bohemian jugglers are to exhibit their feats to-day at Willis's Rooms."

"At 'Lord Vilz's hotel'! Alas! alas! This is nearly as bad as the Waddlestone affair!"

"Now don't laugh, Frederica ! There is really nothing to make the subject of a jest in a circumstance so degrading."

"A note, my lady!" interrupted Mrs. Pasley, gliding to Lady Rawleigh's side, with a salver in her hand, and in her eyes the ordinary restlessness of a lady's-maid curiosity. And while she retired with several petty movements at return, like the ebbing of the tide on a level shore, Frederica, with Lady Olivia's permission, read as follows :—

"As well as the pungent flavour of Barilla with which you were infected when last I saw you would permit me to understand your explanations, my dear Frederica, you have resolved to disappoint me touching the races to-morrow. But can you persist in such barbarity? It is too late for me to secure another companion ; and I cannot go alone with Sir Robert Morse, Lord Calder, and Mr. Vaux, who form the party. The horses have long been ordered, and must be paid for, go or stay. Gunter has packed our champagne and our Périgords. I have a *paille d'Italie* hanging before my eyes, which drives me to distraction ; and I shall certainly never forgive you if you persist in your unfriendly design. Mr. Vaux will doubtless infer that you were afraid to trust yourself with Calder ; and the world will whisper that you

were apprehensive of showing yourself in public, with your reputation still *mottled* by contact with Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone House, and chose to stay at home *in the suds*. Ask Lady Olivia—ask any one you please except your cross-grained self—whether it would not be far wiser on your part to efface the scandal by appearing in public, surrounded by persons more worthily qualified for your friendship than Waddlestone and Co.?

“Yrs. (as you decide),

“LOUISA ERSKYNE.”

Lady Rawleigh did *not* consult her aunt. She saw there was no escape from so eager an appeal; that, in case of her persisting in refusal, Louisa would probably arrive in person to plead her cause; and Frederica was so little in the habit of giving pain, or addicted to the salutary austerity of saying “No!” that she beheld herself already seated, a repining victim, in the corner of Mrs. Erskyne’s britschka.

She replied, therefore, by a hasty consent to resume her engagement; qualified by an entreaty that her friend would endeavour to procure in the interim some less reluctant companion: and despatched at the same time a note of excuse to Lady Barbara Dynley, whose assembly—expressly devised to ensure a second exhibition of the court-heads of the morning—she had long promised to attend: then, with considerable vexation of spirit, proceeded with her aunt to Charles-street, to dine *en famille* with her mother. Even there, she did not think it necessary to allude to her engagement for the races; fearing that her brother’s suspicions might be renewed, on learning that Lord Calder was to be of the party.

Meanwhile Mrs. Erskyne had not the slightest intention of profiting by Frederica’s hint that she should seek out some less scrupulous female companion. She was aware that no one would suit her purpose half so well as Lady Rawleigh; that no one was more capable of throwing away a dozen guineas without calculation or regret; no one less likely to detect the double flirtation she was carrying on by way of pastime, with Mr. Vaux and Sir Robert Morse. But above all, the artful Louisa was conscious that she was indebted to the temptation held out of her friend’s society, for Lord Calder’s acceptance of her invitation.

It was probably the first time in his life his lordship had consented to appear in public in any other than one of his own matchless equipages; and at any other moment, to go toddling along the road with one of Newman’s unmatched sets, would have little suited his fastidious fancy. He regarded Mrs. Erskyne as a pretty little kitten, who, under pretence of innocent playfulness, was in the habit of making a very indiscriminate use of her claws; and

detested Sir Robert Morse, as a vulgar fine gentleman,—a third-rate man with first-rate pretensions. But Lady Rawleigh,—the lovely, tranquil Lady Rawleigh,—with her unsuspecting heart and unpretending demeanour,—was an atonement for all evils, animate and inanimate.

In one respect, his misgivings were premature. Mrs. Erskyne lived too much in male society, and was surrounded by too many fashionable devotees, to be encumbered with a heavy carriage in addition to a heavy husband. Her horses, bespoken by Lord Putney, were as the “couriers of the air.” And when, under the cheering influence of a sunny morning, the britschka glided to the door, with Vaux and Lord Putney (Sir Robert had turned sulky) in the rumble, Lord Calder occupying the back seat for the first time since his Etonian boyhood, and a corner left for Lady Rawleigh beside Louisa in her *paille d'Italie*, no fault could be detected in the arrangements of the day.

Even Frederica, as she issued from her house, followed by Martin and her mantle, experienced an involuntary impulse of exhilaration which seemed to reflect the sunshine of the skies on her beaming and ingenuous countenance. The door was sharply closed as she took her seat among her companions. The post-boys received their signal. And away they went,—joyous with youth, and health, and prosperity !

Noisy and self-engrossed, neither the party nor its attendants, had been conscious of a voice which,—like that of John Gilpin’s loving spouse,—reiterated “Stop—stop !” as they bowled away from the door. Even the jangle of the antiquated vehicle which now rattled up, at the rear of a jaded pair of rats, such as are kept half alive till after Epsom and Ascot races, to act as substitutes for the post-horses of travellers reaching London at that inauspicious moment,—remained inaudible. A head, which resembled that of a capuchin pigeon poking out of a dove-cote to watch for rain, protruded from the dexter window of Mr. Lexley’s travelling carriage; while from the sinister—and sinister indeed was the portent; Sir Brooke was stretching his indignant visage, to behold the wilful, wayward, wanton, rebellious, and treacherous departure of Frederica on an expedition of frivolous amusement ; in defiance of his vociferous and reiterated mandate of recall ; in company with a woman he despised and a man he dreaded ; and, in spite of his own absence, smiling upon both, with more than her usual sportive gaiety !

CHAPTER XVI.

OBL.—O, but she is wise!

Ros.—Or else she could not have the wit to do this;—the wiser the way-warmer.

AS YOU LIKE IT.

DURING the sojourn of the unfortunate Sir Brooke Rawleigh in the borough of Martwich, he had scarcely suffered more from the impracticable and litigious character of its burgesses, than from his misgivings touching the proceedings of his establishment in the metropolis. While condemned to endure in the service of his country and its parliament, all the vexations which parchment, pounce, and pragmatically could produce, the letters of Frederica appeared to him almost as ominous of coming evil, as the deeds of the solicitors of the trustees of the minor whose estate included in its net produce the borough whose representation he was ambitious of appropriating.

Though the post of Tuesday had asserted Lady Rawleigh's intention to excuse herself from attending Lord Calder's supper party, that of Wednesday produced a volume in praise of the society by which she had found it graced; and Wednesday's declarations, that Frederica had no intention of again seeking the tumultuous pleasures of the great world during the absence of her husband, were neutralized by Thursday's description of the supreme excellence of the ball of the preceding night. But when—edged into the suspicious brevity of a postscript extorted by Launceston's threats—he perused the slight notice, "Lord Calder has accidentally found his way into my prohibited drawing-room. He was, as usual, rather caustic but very amusing,"—his heart began to fail him; and he was even moved to inquire with more pertinacity than was at all agreeable to the host of the Black Bull, "How long this tedious corporation business would detain him at Martwich?"

Luckily, his friend Lexley was more conversant than himself with the botherations attendant on all traffic and barter in corporation wares. He bade the refractory Rawleigh take patience; and was content with taking great credit for his temperate meditation. But alas! *his* was the only credit accorded. While the legal advisers of the trustees of the minor of the estate of Martwich examined with scrutinizing investigation the number and numbers of the notes they were about to place to the innocent infant's account, per favour of Mr. Ruggs and the timber of the Oxley estate, mine host of the sable Bull would have resented with indignation the slightest scrutiny exercised by Sir Brooke into the

contents of the three yards and three-quarters of rancid paper, containing a register of the appetites of the four-and-twenty burghesses of the ancient town of Martwich. The amount—whether in pounds of beef or Bank of England notes—was somewhat alarming.

After receiving the receipt of the author of all the punch composed in his honour, he threw himself back in the corner of Mr. Lexley's carriage; satisfied that, with the exception of pin-money, no coin of the realm is more unsatisfactorily bestowed than the money wasted in such enforced hospitalities.

Instead of the satisfaction and dignity he had anticipated, his whole life long, as co-existent with the senatorial estate, he found his ill-humour increasing from mile to mile; nor would any turnpike-man along that road of many trusts, have believed that the rueful visage gracing one side of "Squire Lexley's old chay," was that of the member newly elected and duly returned for the borough recently vacated by the late much respected Peter Grampus, Esq., who had expired of good health and a fashionable quack.

Well would it have been for poor Martin, if the dignity of the buttery-hatch had permitted him to follow his lady to the races in a subordinate capacity; or if the perquisites of the steward's room had enabled him to make the excursion on his own behoof. Sir Brooke, though he had roused poor Lexley from the profound inhumation of an inn feather-bed, so prematurely that the slipshod waiters and the candles of the preceding night were yet unextinguished, in order to reach London at the earliest possible hour;—Sir Brooke, though guiltless of any food more substantial than a biscuit, since the "tough and scorched mutton" of the preceding day,—could not be persuaded to sit down to his tea and French rolls in Bruton-street, till he had cross-examined the speaker of his lower house.

But, alas! the new M.P. gathered nothing satisfactory from his responses; nor even from the uninvited loquacity of the parti-coloured vassal who brought in the "bubbling and loud-hissing urn." "My lady had been here—my lady had been there;"—or rather, "My Lord Calder had been *here*, and my lady had been *there*."

"Has Lady Rawleigh been riding, Thomas? Did you hear the groom mention whether the new horse carried her ladyship well?"

"Oh! no, Sir Brooke. My lady has been so taken up at the picture man's, which is painting her ladyship's portrait—".

"Portrait?"

"And my lady goes reg'lar every day to Regent-street, to the French gentleman's, Sir."

"That will do. I will ring when I want you," cried his astonished master.

Even could Sir Brooke Rawleigh have observed the grimace bestowed on him by his footman as he quitted the room, it would not have increased the measure of his indignation. But when, on the exit of the prying Thomas, he started up from the breakfast-table to pace the room in breathless irritation, and was arrested at the second turn by that attentive domestic's return to inform his master that "The housekeeper desired him to mention there was cold fowl in the house," Sir Brooke could willingly have annihilated him on the spot. "I beg your pardon, Sir Brooke," said he, in a most provokingly low and confidential voice, "but I have just recollect that my lady sent orders by Mrs. Pasley, as no one was to mention in the servants' hall on no account about the picture. I ask your pardon, Sir Brooke, but I should be sorry to get my lady's anger for not recollecting her orders."

"Go, sir!" cried the agonized baronet, "go, and—"—the rest of the sentence was drowned in the violent slamming of the dining-room door.

And now, was not the fatal truth apparent? Was he not the most wretched of mankind? A mysterious picture,—a secret visit,—a degrading confidence reposed in her very menial,—a confidence broken only because the treacherous Thomas had probably been unsecured by a sufficient bribe!—Frederica, *his* Frederica—*his* own pure, gentle, spotless Frederica, had deceived him, wronged him, forsaken him. He pushed away the plate of rolls; and, leaning his elbows on the vacant space, covered his face with his hands.

The first impulse of the injured husband was despair; the second, a desire for vengeance; nor did the urn, which sent up its steamy column on the table before him, boil with a fiercer heat than his own heart. Snatching up his hat, he rushed from the house; and Thomas, who mounted the area steps to watch the direction taken by his distracted master, began to fear that he had been rash in his communication, and that Sir Brooke was gone to throw himself into the Serpentine.

While confidentially communicating this intelligence to the under-housemaid, the object of his apprehensions was, however, quietly knocking at Lady Launceston's door. *Quietly* is perhaps an erroneous term; for the old lady's veteran butler afterwards noticed to her septuagenarian housekeeper, that he had given a rat-tat more than usual to the knocker.

There exist in the world—in the *conventional* world—certain spots endowed with local sanctity of a peculiar kind. In many

patriarchal houses, custom has for so many years moderated the movements and lowered the voices of its inhabitants, that any unusual elevation of tone, or acceleration of action, passes for a crime. Sir Brooke Rawleigh had not been so long the son-in-law of Lady Launceston without becoming aware that it was her custom to send for Dr. Camomile after being disordered by a sudden noise ; and so powerful was the influence of her *sotto-voce* habits upon the feelings of the many to whom she was endeared by her kindly and amiable nature, that so far from borrowing Gargantua's mouth, or the petulance of a provincial Harry VIII., to exclaim " Within there, ho ! " to the tardy domestic who turned the door upon its voiceless hinges, as if it were the wicket of the *Enfans Trouvés*, opening to receive some new-born babe, he actually subdued his indignation to demand, in the concert-pitch of Charles-street attunement, whether Lady Launceston were at home, and would receive him.

Instead, however, of listening for the reply, which in that pacific vestibule was usually uttered in a pianissimo resembling the intonation of the invisible girl, he stalked past the trembling domestic ; and albeit, like Tarquin, he " did gently press the rushes " in ascending the stairs, his steps were by no means so measured as could have been wished. It was evident from the deep blush with which Miss Elbany rose from Lady Rawleigh's harp as he threw open the drawing-room door, that she anticipated the approach of the son of her patroness, rather than that of the new member for Martwich.

" Where is Lady Launceston ? " cried he, in an agitated voice. " Can I see her ? "

" Lady Olivia Tadcaster roused her out of her sleep this morning at eight o'clock, and talked her into a fever. She is taking some additional rest after such a shock, and such an exertion, so that I should be sorry to wake her. But you seem agitated—I trust no family mischance ? Lady Rawleigh—Lord Launceston—What has occurred ? "

" Nothing—nothing ! " cried Sir Brooke, still holding the door in his hand, and retaining his hat on his head, in a state of evident bewilderment, such as seemed to announce to poor Lucy that the object of her artful designs was either killed in a duel, or arrested by his tailor.

" Do not deceive me," said she, advancing with blanched cheeks and quivering lips towards the perturbed Rawleigh.

" I have not heard a word of Launceston since I left town," said he ; preserving amid all his afflictions the presence of mind to interpret her emotion.

"Then Marston or Rawleighford must be burned down!" thought Lucy, as she gazed upon his haggard looks; "or the bank has stopped payment, or—" but she curtailed her conjectures on perceiving that their mysterious object was about to quit the room.

"Can I be of the least use to you?" she now inquired, approaching him yet nearer, and speaking in that ingratiating tone which the heart of man is so little prepared to resist, that even Sir Brooke, though just then possessed with a spirit which might have done honour to the shaggy breast of a bear, was mollified by its soothing influence. He removed the objectionable hat, and became humanized in a moment.

"Thank you, no! I need not trouble *you*. It is needless to disturb and vex other people with one's affairs."

"I shall be most happy to be vexed with yours, if it will relieve your uneasiness," she continued, pushing a chair towards him, while she assumed her seat on the sofa. Suspecting, perhaps, something of the sources of his vexation, she was evidently anxious to obtain a full confession of the grievances of Sir Brooke.

"Miss Elbany!" said he, dashing down his gloves on the table, and mechanically accepting the proffered chair. "I am the most miserable man on earth!" And the loss of his night's rest and morning's breakfast qualified his lengthened visage, in corroboration of the statement. "But a week ago—such is the infatuation of human blindness—I thought myself blest with all the choicest gifts of heaven. Even a few hours since, had any one with friendly interposition forewarned me of the truth, and revealed to me the actual state of my—"

"My dear Sir Brooke!" interrupted Miss Elbany, really or affectedly terrified by his agitation, "you alarm me beyond measure. What *has* occurred to Lady Rawleigh?"

"She is gone to Epsom races."

"Is that all? She has a very fine day for the expedition."

"She is gone with Mrs. William Erskyne."

"One of her oldest friends."

"She is gone with Mr. Vaux."

"The oldest friend of all the world."

"With—*Lord Calder*."

"The most agreeable companion and best bred man in London."

Sir Brooke Rawleigh began to think the companion the very reverse of either, when she continued—

"I am delighted to find that her ladyship is in the way of passing so pleasant a morning; for since you left town, she has been sadly out of spirits. Lady Rawleigh dined here yesterday; and when she quitted us, Lady Launceston observed that she should certainly

write to remonstrate with you if you prolonged your stay at Mart-wich; for that poor Frederica was losing all her good looks with fretting."

Rawleigh, who had not yet succeeded in obliterating from his mental vision the smile of healthful loveliness which had shone across Mrs. Erakyne's britschka from the countenance of his wife full upon that of Lord Calder, muttered something in the depths of his soul touching the inventive mendacity of the female sex. But recollecting that no bond of mutual amity demanded the obligation of a lie on the part of Miss Elbany in behalf of her patroness's daughter, he contented himself with observing aloud, "With fretting? You mean with the suggestions of an evil conscience!"

"Come, come!" cried Miss Elbany, good-humouredly. "I am beginning to suspect what is the matter with you. It only remains for me to discover by what Iago—by what 'insinuating knave—what cogging, cozening slave,' these unpleasant suspicions have been instilled into your mind. Is it Mr. Lexley, by word of mouth, or Lord Launceston, by word of letter?"

"Facts, Miss Elbany, speak for themselves."

"I trust they speak more explicitly than you do. For with all your eloquence, you have brought forward no real subject of complaint."

"Do you call it nothing that ever since I left town, Frederica has thought proper to throw herself into the society of a person most distasteful to *me*, most dangerous to her own reputation?"

"You mean Lord Calder. You are not yet in the House, and may therefore *name* 'the noble lord' with impunity. And if she have,—where is the fault of such a proceeding? How can she possibly avoid the presence of a man frequenting her own circle, and courted in every other?"

"This is no apology for her visit to Calder House."

"Would you have had her excuse herself under circumstances that must have created universal suspicions of your jealousy and want of confidence in your wife."

"Want of confidence?—It is my blind reliance on her prudence which has proved the origin of all this evil. I ought not to have left her alone in London."

"At the distance of a few hundred yards from the protection of her nearest relatives, with whom she has associated daily and almost hourly, since your departure!—But of what further do you complain?"

"Of follies which require a better explanation than even your partiality can invent in her favour. I have accidentally learned from my servants,—yes! Miss Elbany, Lady Rawleigh's indiscretions

have even placed her in the power of her own menials,—that during my stay at Martwich, my wife has been paying mysterious visits to some unaccountable abode in Regent-street."

"Those who condescend to listen to the reports of servants, deserve to be mystified by the signs and wonders of their vulgar ignorance."

"They pretend that she is sitting for her picture!—very likely!—Destined no doubt to adorn the private gallery of Calder House!"

"Or perhaps to become the companion of yonder miniature," said Miss Elbany, pointing to a portrait of Lord Launceston, suspended opposite to his mother's favourite sofa. "Fie—fie!—I thought you superior to all this folly. But I must do something more than reprove, since I have your reform at heart. I must convince, and quickly,—for we may be interrupted."

Chafing a little at the tone of authority assumed by the companion, Rawleigh prepared himself to listen with as much patience as his sorrows and hunger would admit.

"You are well aware," she began, "that *I* have no reason to be biassed in favour of Lady Rawleigh;—that from the moment of her arrival in town, she has treated me with a degree of distrust and contempt, such as I never experienced from any other person; though my poverty and helplessness should have been my protection against her unkindness."

As he gazed on the countenance of the beautiful Lucy, softened by sensibility and blushing with earnestness, Sir Brooke thought he had never beheld so beautiful a creature; and his indignation against Frederica increased with this allusion to her injuries.

"But I cannot allow my private resentments against Lady Rawleigh to influence my views of her conduct. Relying on your goodnature to inquire no further on the subject than I am inclined to tell you, I give you my honour that I happened to be in that mysterious dwelling in Regent-street at the very moment of her visit; and I myself overheard her enforce a promise of secrecy respecting the picture, because she wished it to surprise her mother, and, as that of a stranger, obtain an impartial verdict from her husband."

"When ladies exact promises of secrecy, they are at liberty to assign their own motives."

"But how could she hope to deceive you who will naturally have to pay the artist?"

"Oh, no!—Frederica is quite independent. Frederica has her pin money to defray the cost of her follies,—whether vicious or frivolous."

"I will not hear another word on the subject, if you discuss it in such unhandsome terms. You have no right to apply an epithet to

your wife, which you would not suffer to be employed against her by another person;—an epithet of which no living woman can be less deserving.”

Sir Brooke appeared touched by this generous enthusiasm.

“ I venture to assert,” continued Miss Elbany, “ that no feeling ever rested in the heart,—no idea ever entered the mind of Lady Rawleigh, which might not be safely confided to you,—to me,—to the whole world. The life of routine and filial submission which preceded her marriage having deprived her of all experience in the habits and temptations of general society, she is now learning her lesson. And if, on occasion of every trivial error arising from ignorance of the world, she is to encounter the severe misinterpretation of those on whose leniency she has the best claim, we must not be surprised to find her, at some future time, indifferent to their condemnation. You are jealous,—do not disavow it; and you have lent a willing ear to your own misrepresentations and those of other people. But recollect the powerful declaration of Sterne, that ‘ whenever a helpless and innocent victim is to be sacrificed, it is easy to pick up sticks enough in any thicket where it has strayed, to make a fire to offer it up with.’ ”

“ I have a great mind,” said Sir Brooke, after a momentary fancy that Miss Lucy Elbany would have made a better governess than companion,—a fancy which caused him to pause and leave this first proposition somewhat unluckily exposed to the ridicule of that lovely preceptress, who regarded his *mind*, as exhibited in the present instance, to be peculiarly *little*,—“ I have a *very* great mind to appeal to Frederica’s candour for an explanation of this business; and thus confirm or terminate my suspicions.”

“ There never was a woman bold enough to act as you suppose, who wanted cunning to vindicate her conduct,” said Miss Elbany, calmly. “ I should have no faith in Lady Rawleigh’s innocence on her own asseveration; but satisfied as I am on that point, I advise you to wait for a voluntary explanation, which will prove far more satisfactory to your feelings. If I have any skill in human nature, her confidence will not be long delayed. With such quick sensibility and honourable principles, she is incapable of deception.”

“ I wish she had been incapable of going to the races this morning,” sighed Sir Brooke.

“ Had she known that her predilection for a beautiful drive on a summer’s day, in company with several persons of her own rank in life, would expose her to her husband’s ungenerous usage in a secret cross-examination of her servants during her absence, and his intention of alarming her mother, and irritating her brother, b-

an overcharged statement of facts, she would probably have relinquished her project."

"Then, after all, how *would* you advise me to act?" said Sir Brooke, glad to find his suspicions and anger in some measure appeased by the arguments of a person so impartial as Miss Elbany. And as his agonies abated, he began to recur with tenderness to his absent wife and neglected breakfast,—so that hunger had perhaps some share in his moderation.

"To act?—I see no occasion for *action*. Receive Lady Rawleigh as you usually do, and as she deserves, with affectionate warmth; and I am certain her explanations will supersede all necessity for accusation."

"I believe you are right," said Rawleigh, taking up his hat, "and I am sure you are very kind. I have no right to trouble you with these tedious details."

"Are you not aware," said she, laughingly extending her hand towards him, "that women—especially spinters like myself—have an instinctive taste for hearing of domestic squabbles, either for the sake of instruction or—mischief?"

"*You*, at least, are a peacemaker!" said he; and the relief of his mind, and the softening of his heart by the prospect of his return to the French rolls and cold fowl, induced the sober baronet to imprint a ceremonious salute upon the fair hand which attempted not to resist a mere act of courtesy.

And lo! at the moment the lips of Sir Brooke were applied to those taper fingers, Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham were ushered into the room!

CHAPTER XVII.

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

ROMEO AND JULIET.

NOTWITHSTANDING the air of amazement with which Lady Huntingfield gazed on the awkward and hasty retreat effected by her Rawleighford neighbour, and the sneer of incredulity with which she listened to the explanations of Lady Launceston's companion as to the impossibility of her ladyship's receiving visits that morning, she was far from expressing the amount of her surprise and indignation at the scene she had witnessed.

The object of her visit to Charles-street was to ascertain, if possible, from the ingenuous indiscretion of Lady Launceston, the real nature of the connexion between her daughter and "the

strange soap-boiling woman" with whom she thought proper to associate. Lady Huntingfield was one of those scrupulous persons who renounce, without much examination, the society of any unlucky individual around whom the malice of the world has raised a cloud. No one was more rigorously disposed to maintain the quarantine laws of fashionable life, and reject all contact with infected persons. But unluckily, the Lazaretto she avoided was provided for the shame, rather than the sin—for offenders convicted of *mauvais ton*, as well as of moral irregularities. "Nobody seems to like him," or "she is quite in a second-rate set," were sentences of exclusion from her friendship.

Lady Huntingfield had therefore the mortification of being disappointed of the information she coveted, as well as of witnessing the immorality of Lady Launceston's son-in-law, and the provoking self-possession of her companion. But as Lady Huntingfield herself observed when she recounted the affair to her friend Lady Lawford that evening, "what can one expect but confidence from a creature in such a situation in life!"

Meanwhile as dinner approached, and Sir Brooke Rawleigh flattered himself that Mrs. Erskyne's britschka, with its miscellaneous contents, was also approaching, he began to grow fidgety touching the result of the interview. Though, in pursuance of Miss Elbany's somewhat professional advice, he strove to calm down the instigations of the busy devil by which he was possessed, he could neither take his usual ride, nor assume his ordinary routine of occupation. He found himself wandering with restless anxiety, from one room to the other;—examining the notes and cards of invitation on Frederica's writing-table; and flinging into the street, with very superfluous vivacity, a little sprig of myrtle which he discovered on her toilet!

Already the roar of carriages which proclaims the springtide of the ocean of fashion, began to subside into the occasional rumble announcing the desertion of the dusty streets for the still more dusty park. It was six o'clock—half-past—nearly seven; but still no britschka appeared!

A bright thought suddenly illuminated that mind, which Sir Brooke had inadvertently proclaimed a *great* mind in his morning colloquy with Miss Elbany. He would go and dine at his club, leaving no message for Frederica; in order that on her return from her ill-chosen expedition, she might be distracted with doubts and anxieties equal to his own!

"I will just wait a quarter of an hour, and see!" muttered Sir Brooke, in the sort of anxious tone which prognosticates a delay of two or three quarters of an hour; but when these and more had

passed away, and the house became impregnated with a savoury odour—proclaiming that the patties were burning in the oven, and the cutlets on the stove—while Martin more than once introduced his rueful visage into the room with an inquiry, “whether dinner was to be served?”—he could no longer master his patience sufficiently to stay and watch the issue. Replying with mysterious ambiguity, that he did not dine at home, the injured man stalked out of the house, taking his way towards Pall Mall at postman’s speed.

But Thomas, who was once more on the watch for his departure, no longer predicted mischief from the Serpentine River. His master had forfeited all romantic interest in his eyes by having returned with avidity to the cold fowl. The experienced footman felt assured that the hour which flavours the aristocratic atmosphere of the West-end with an aroma of *vol-a-vents* and *purées* such as in itself might almost dine a pauper, was not likely to be selected by a man of taste for *felo-de-se!* It is remarkable, that the feeding-hour which so fiercely animates the instincts of the brute creation, only serves to tame down the energies of those equally carnivorous animals who are addicted to the stew-pan and the gridiron. The dinner-bell, which is a tocsin to the passions of Zoological Gardens, is soothing as Dante’s “*squilla di lontana,*” to the ears whose appurtenant eyes and mouths are accustomed to feast on the scientific compounds of Ude.

Having ordered his dinner immediately on emerging from the mighty portico into the mighty vestibule of the mighty pile, destined to assemble daily half a hundred pygmies of the fashionable Lilliput, Sir Brooke Rawleigh proceeded to beguile the interval of preparation in the most obscure chair of the most occult corner of the reading-room—at that hour nearly deserted. As he ensconced himself within the shadow of a half-closed *jalousie*, he became invisible to all comers, with the exception of a little old gentleman, with a short pig-tail and a long nose, with whom he was only acquainted by name, who sat opposite wondering by what catoptrical process the honourable member, sheltered behind the main-sheet of the *Times*, could manage to decipher its mysteries in a reversed position. Sir Brooke had, in fact, visited on this occasion the club he was least in the habit of frequenting, and had the honour of being mistaken by his elderly critic for the learned Dr. Brewster.

But the policy displayed by poor Rawleigh in selecting for the deglutition of his stewed veal *aux petit pois*, a spot in which he was not accustomed to show his face more than twice in the season, proved of bad omen for the future interests of the borough of Mart-wich. While still ruminating behind his inverted newspaper on ‘the disasters of his destiny, and wondering whether the remarkable

event which had caused Lady Olivia Tadcaster to talk her unfortunate sister *out* of her sleep—(a *vice versa* as remarkable as the topsy-turvy position of his own studies)—had any reference to the indecorous proceedings of her niece, a group of men of his acquaintance entered the room, to whom the presence of Sir Brooke appeared as little probable as their arrival was little agreeable to himself. Unequal to general conversation, he contrived, by elevating his paper screen, to escape detection. But alas! this rash ambuscade proved only an aggravation of his former imprudence.

"I tell you," said the snappish voice of Sir Robert Morse. "I tell you she would not have dared conduct herself in such a manner if Rawleigh had been in town. Poor Rawleigh, with all his faults, is aware of what is due to his family and to himself."

"Pho, pho!" cried Sir Mark Milman, seating himself at the round table in the centre of the room, "what signify to *you* Lady Rawleigh's sayings or doings? By circulating the tale, you authenticate the scandal. To-day it runs the round of the clubs—to-morrow of the newspapers, and at length—"

But Sir Brooke was not destined to learn the catastrophe anticipated by Sir Mark Milman. The moment the outline of his head betrayed, through the half-closed jalouse, a human presence, one of those handmaidens of Flora who frequent the streets in the months of May and June, took her station opposite the window, where, ever and anon, she held up faded bunches of lilies of the valley and narcissus, wrapped in paper scribbled over with a schoolboy's exercise. At first, she contented herself with dropping, from minute to minute, a curtsey of supplication, but no sooner did Morse and Milman, and Traveller Broughley commence the dialogue so fraught with painful interest to the ears of Sir Brooke, than her pantomime expanded into speech, and her speech into one of those curious specimens of autobiography, "half song, half sermon," the nasal twang of which completely drowned the dialogue of the group at the round table. By the time that the shilling thrown to her by "poor Rawleigh" had caused her to "move on," the learned Theban was on his legs, and his eloquence would perhaps have been equally intelligible to his unseen friend, had it been phrased in one of the erudite speaker's Oriental tongues—the Doric of the King of Ashantee—or the talkee-talkee of the Gold Coast.

"I knew him well in Italy," said Broughley. "And as my friends Gonsalvi and Belvilacqua used to observe, no British hand was ever more prodigal in adorning with gems the diadem of the Eternal City. From Tuscany to Rome, from Rome to Naples, his progress was marked with the munificence of a sovereign prince."

Sir Brooke had no difficulty in finding an antecedent for Mr. Broughley's "him," in the presence of Lord Calder.

"Yet with all his splendours and abilities, I confess myself at a loss to account for Lady Rawleigh's partiality—a partiality demonstrating itself in so unbecoming a time and place."

"They are all such a set!" cried Sir Robert Morse, with the impartiality that men of his class display towards their bosom friends. "There is Launceston, whom nothing but his peerage keeps out of the Fleet, or the Penitentiary, actually making love to his mother's companion—probably some strolling actress in disguise."

"And then Lady Olivia Tadcaster," observed Broughley, "what can exceed the absurdity of her conduct, unless that of her niece? She has positively been introducing a set of ambulant mountebanks, the refuse of the Leipsic fair, into the first society in London, merely because they happened to have an unpronounceable name, and to eat snails and sauerkraut without wincing."

"Ay! what was that business?" inquired Sir Robert. "Lady Barbara Dynley told me last night that she had been entrapped into a party at Richmond with a tribe of show-people."

"Now, my dear Morse—my dear Sir Robert," cried Milman, "why should you push the investigation further. What matters it to you that two foolish women have made themselves ridiculous? Leave them to the chastisement of their mutual reproaches."

"What has become of Rawleigh all this time?" inquired Broughley, who, on missing any member of society, was apt to infer from his own propensities that he might be fishing for flexible stones in the Yellow Sea, or botanizing on the Alpuarres.

"Oh! Lady Rawleigh made it a condition on their marriage that he should go into the House, in order to insure his occasional absence from his own. She persuaded him to deal with Lexley for the borough of Martwiche; and last week they dragooned him down to make a bow to the corporation."

Now this statement on the part of Sir Robert Morse, offensive as it was, afforded considerable solace to the wounded spirit of Sir Brooke. The incorrectness of its facts, and unfairness of its deductions, were just so much evidence in favour of the innocence of Frederica. But his own situation was becoming extremely embarrassing. Though the voices of the interlocutors before him were not so elevated but that he might be supposed to have remained deaf to their intelligence, still he *had* heard and might hear further of their odious insinuations. To collar three full-grown men,—to seize the horrid Cerberus by whose calumnious bark he had been assailed, and eject it from the window,—would

have been a work of difficulty, danger, and indecorum, and might possibly cause both the quarrel and its motive to be bruited over the town with all its injurious inferences touching the reputation of the Launceston family. He resolved, therefore, to attack the malicious triumvirate singly—first by a demand for explanation, and secondly by wager of battle; being aware that even the best of Manton's pistols are but double-barrelled, and that to subdue three enemies at once is a feat only compassable by some Briarean wonder at Astley's. The very paper in his hands shook and rustled with the suppressed struggle of his emotions!

But before Sir Brooke Rawleigh had fully decided on the line of action he should pursue, and whether his extermination of Frederica's detractors should be summary or progressive, Milman and Morse had caught sight of the respectable long-nosed short-tailed gentleman, who was occupied in the perusal of an alphabetical list of the House of Commons near him; and being aware, from fatal experience, of those powers of colloquial oppression which render his narratives by no means so concise as his little queue, they motioned to Broughley to follow them, and sidled out of the room; the worthy member's visage being at all times good at clearing the gallery. They departed just in time. In another minute, the breathless waiter, who was in search of the proprietor of the spring soup which now smoked in an adjoining apartment, entered, as they fled across the hall, to summon Sir Brooke from his ensconce.

But what availed or soup or mate-lote? The appetite of the wretched Rawleigh had departed with the slanderers; and not even the prospect of one of Lexley's "bachelor-fare" dinners could have increased his nausea. But though his disgust had attained its acme, his vexation was destined to a sensible augmentation when, on approaching the Julianne aforesaid, he perceived at an adjoining table—having so completely finished his own meal as to have no further occupation but a toothpick and a bottle of claret to interfere with his social propensities—the man of all others he would have avoided at such a crisis. On this occasion no friendly paper-screen interposed to rescue him from the recognition of his friend; and Mr. Dynley expressed as much joy at his arrival, as he had recently experienced on the flight of Milman and Co.

Mr. Dynley has been hitherto only collaterally introduced to the reader, in the person of his better half; a familiar vulgarism very aptly embodied by Lady Barbara, who was pretty and goodnatured, while the inferior moiety was cynical both in feature and humour. He was often called "the ugliest dog in London." But

on the whole, this by-word was too social to designate a personage so tinged with rancorous malignity; nor could anything less than the recommendation of a pretty popular wife, a gentlemanly address, and a certain degree of originality, explain the endurance exercised by the fashionable world in his favour. The apparent aim of his conversation was to instil into the ears of his acquaintance, every drop of bitter personality he could gather for their annoyance.

But such is the impotence of human will, and such the finiteness of human comprehension, that the discourse of the pacific and philanthropic Sir Mark Milman had been fated to cause severe pain to the sensitive bosom of the new member for Martwich, while the malicious intentions of Mr. Dynley were productive of solace and consolation. His spite became as it were a balm to the wounds of "poor Rawleigh;" as the rattlesnake is supposed among the Indians to contain an antidote for its own venom.

No sooner was the silver ~~tozen~~ removed from the table, so that its interceptive steam no longer obstructed his view of the countenance he was preparing to convulse with anger, than Dynley exclaimed in a cordial friendly way, that he would come and take his wine for company's sake at Sir Brooke's table; and without waiting for the acquiescence he knew could not be withheld, drew his chair, and commenced his attack.

"Well, my dear fellow! and so you are *in* for Martwich? I must fill my glass in honour of your success! I trust you have been on your guard with our friend Lexley. Between ourselves, there is not a greater *do* in nature than that plausible rascal. He is like the lion who, dividing the spoil on all occasions, takes care to possess himself of umpire's share."

"On *this* occasion there was no spoil to divide. A proposition was made me, which my advisers thought a fair one. I accepted,—and the business was concluded. There could be no opportunity for my being *done*, as you call it."

"Well! take care he does not entangle you on first entering the House; he may manage to sell the *member* for Martwich as well as the borough, and without your finding it out."

"Thank you for the caution! I will not prove myself a greater blockhead than I can help. Waiter!—my cutlets."

"By the way, Rawleigh, it was well imagined of you to make your election fall on the day of the drawing-room. You left the scandal entirely on Lady Rawleigh's shoulders."

"I do not understand you," said Sir Brooke, reddening with a recollection of the insinuations of Morse.

"Ay! no wonder you consider it a blushing matter. Where on

earth did you pick them up? But I need not pluralize the charge. I cannot suppose that *you* would incur the risk of erasure from Lady Derenzy's will."

" You are as full of enigmas as a schoolboy's pocket-book."

" I do not mean to say that I was not acquainted with the family *myself* during my winter at Rome. Waddlestone was a great man *there*, with his subscriptions for the examination of the Tiber, and his institution of professorships. I used to dine with him once or twice a week. But I should have thought that no humanized individual would undertake the stigma of presenting *Mrs.* Waddlestone. I assure you Lady Rawleigh has set the world in an uproar by her magnanimity. I apprise you, however, that she is universally blamed. The 'Noes' have it."

" Thank God! " piously ejaculated Sir Brooke, to the amazement of his companion, who entertained no suspicion from how vast a load of uneasiness he had redeemed the heart of the husband,—of obloquy, the fair fame of the wife. It would have been little less than martyrdom to Mr. Dynley had he recognised his own agency in such an act of benevolence.

" Lady Rawleigh's interference on the occasion was wholly unpremeditated," observed Sir Brooke. " But say no more on the subject. Her conduct has my entire approbation."

" Insensible brute!" muttered Dynley, turning towards the table he had quitted, for a new toothpick.

" To be sure it is not half so bad as old Tadcaster's business! " resumed he, recovering his usual confidence. " No wonder she is off into Essex; she never could have found courage to see 'The Czartobarzkna Family' placarded at every corner of the street, after having proclaimed them as Hochgeboren, at every tea-table in London. She has already announced a *fête champêtre* at her villa, by way of obliterating the scandal; and I hear Lady Rawleigh is to officiate as patroness on the occasion."

" Thank God! " again ejaculated Rawleigh, who was now relieved from all apprehension that Lady Olivia's flight into the country was caused by disgust at the proceedings of her niece. " Dynley! will you taste this Burgundy? It is really far from bad. This is a better dining-house than I expected; the soup augured ill,—the cutlets were so-so. But these quails are excellent, and the soufflé incomparable."

Poor Sir Brooke! His heart was little less light than that aerial consistency; and by the time he had finished his wine and his interview with the astonished Dynley,—who could not account for this sudden exhilaration without the aid of a glass of Champagne,—he prepared to return to Bruton-street, a wiser and a happier man.

To fall down a precipice, and alight at the bottom without bruise or fracture, is so bewildering a catastrophe, that Sir Brooke Rawleigh may even be pardoned his total forgetfulness of an appointment with Lexley at Bellamy's, for the arrangement of "certain preliminaries."

Perhaps his satisfaction might have been in some degree moderated, had he been aware that while he was engaged in eating his dinner under the malignant eyes of Dynley the cynic, Frederica was busied with hers, beneath the partial gaze of Lord Calder. On their way to town, his lordship had surprised the little party with a magnificent collation, at his villa at Roehampton.

CHAPTER XVIII.

O my soul's joy !
If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death,
And let the labouring bark climb hills of sea
Olympus-high !—If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy !

OTHELLO.

THE hilarity of Sir Brooke was somewhat checked when, on his return to Bruton-street, he found that the club-dinner intended as a punishment to his wife, had been wholly superfluous,—that the patties were the only sufferers,—that Frederica was still away. The only arrivals since he quitted home, were a pink satin P.P.C. from Mrs. Woodington, who had raised the siege of Launceston, and marched off to Paris after old gouty Lord Twadell;—and a card of invitation,—on whose vast extent Napoleon might have pricked out the plan of one of his Italian campaigns,—from Mr. and Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone House, for a dinner at a month's warning.

Sir Brooke could devise no motive for the tarrying of the wheels of the britschka, except some fatal accident; and having ascertained from Thomas's malicious information, that "the off-wheeler was a rum 'un, and looked queerish,"—he sat down to execrate Newman's indiscretion in sending out restive horses; and his own, in having abandoned the protection of his innocent and unoffending family, to encounter the punch and poundage of the Black Bull.

Those who have encountered the torture of watching and waiting, hour after hour, for the arrival of a truant,—who know the full force of anguish included in the Italian proverb *Aspettare chi non viene*, can appreciate the flutter of spirit,—half pain—half pleasure,—which agitated Sir Brooke, when at length an unusual noise

in the street and a knock of less than footman's artificiality, announced the arrival of the travelling carriage. It was too dark to look out and observe by whom his wife was accompanied. Nor had he much leisure for the inquiry; for with a step fleet as youth, health, and happiness could make it, Frederica bounded up stairs and threw herself into his arms. He had no time for the assumption of dignity,—of the cold, dry, marital, scrutinizing air he had all day projected. *There* she was, her arms clinging round his neck,—her heart beating with delight against his own;—and, unless he was much mistaken—a tear transmitted from her cheek to his.

But if a tear, it was only a tear of joy! When at length she drew back her face to contemplate his looks, and utter some of those complaints against the length of his absence which so gently cheer the moment of return, the expressive tenderness that irradiated her eyes and flushed her cheek, could not be mistaken as arising from any other impulse than that of happiness at seeing him again. She had forgotten all her vexations,—all her apprehensions. She had thrown her showy bonnet irreverently on the floor, while her loosened tresses hung down in unseemly disorder. She had dragged him back to the easy chair, and was kneeling on the Turkish cushion at his feet;—his hand in hers,—and in her heart, all that buoyancy of affection which the formalities of life so rarely allow to exhibit its vivid impulses. Her beautiful countenance was embellished by all the playfulness of a child,—by all the tenderness of a wife.

While Sir Brooke gazed on its captivating brilliancy, its still more subduing softness, he felt the impossibility of attaching the stigma of suspicion to such a face, to such a woman. Truth and ingenuousness were written there by the authentic hand of Nature. He no longer cared or inquired whether Calder had been the companion of her journey home, whether Lord Putney had been agreeable, or Vaux entertaining. With such an expressive smile beaming from her lips, he would have received her in perfect confidence from a *tête-à-tête* journey with Don Giovanni.

Between lovers,—wedded lovers, parted and reunited for the first time,—a thousand nothings arise for discussion, which to all other persons, including the novelist and the reader, would be insupportably tedious. And perhaps there is no feeling more characteristic of the charm of arriving at home, and being restored to the society dearest to our hearts, than the certainty that *all* may now be said,—that every word will create an interest,—every adventure, sympathy; that, instead of assuming the factitious abridgement of general conversation, to be ourselves, and quite ourselves, is to confer a favour as well as a personal relief.

And Frederica was not only herself, and quite herself on this occasion; and never had that self appeared so matchless in the eyes of her husband. There was no reminiscence of Almack's in the entangled locks of her disordered hair;—no trace of the drawing-room in the almost infantine smile through which her white teeth shone with the lustre of pearls. In her unconnected phrases and hurried narratives, no one would have detected her recent companionship with the stately Calder, or the pedantic Vaux. Purity of nature superseded the necessity for refinement; and she seemed to come back to her home, as a woman should ever come, bringing cheerfulness and joy to its inmates. Nothing of "the Honourable Miss Rawdon" moderated her animation,—nothing of "Lady Rawleigh" dignified her aspect. She was Frederica only—"dearest Frederica!"

Even Martin, when he placed on the table the tea she had asked for on her arrival, forgave her the scorched patties and protracted dinner;—and tea being as it were a native dew, an unfailing source of chirruping to the fair gossips of England,—it was no longer necessary for "poor Rawleigh" to try to possess himself, by force of interrogation, of the itinerary of her day of pleasure.

"And so you are really a fraction of the legislation!" cried Frederica, busy with the arrangement of her cup and saucer. "Let me look at you, and see whether you are grown as wise as the man of Thessaly,—whether you wear the dignities of the senate with becoming gravity?—Only so-so!—You have borrowed nothing at present from Mr. Lexley; though you have paid him so largely.—Tell me——"

"Not one word about Martwick or Lexley, if you value my patience,—I have supped full of them. Rather let me inquire what have you been doing yourself?"

"Every thing that is foolish, imprudent, and extravagant. I have been committing a thousand follies, from mere idleness; and am now ready to repent them with the most assiduous industry."

"No, Fred., you cannot alarm me. I cannot be terrified by confessions uttered with a smile like that.—But what has made you so late?—Have you had a pleasant day?"

"Delightful!—that is, the roads were very dusty, the races very tiresome, and the dinner stupid enough. But we had a most charming adventure. Yes! it was altogether a delightful day!"

Sir Brooke qualified his tea with additional sugar and cream, exclaiming that it was strong, even to bitterness.

"But Martin tells me," she resumed, "that you arrived at home before I quitted the door. How was this, dear Rawleigh? Why did you not stop the carriage? Even if you were too tired to join

our party, you might have allowed me the opportunity of remaining at home with you."

"And lose your *delightful* day?"

"My day has been delightful only in comparison with yesterday and its predecessor, when I was absorbed by a most tiresome occupation—a little secret which you must allow me to keep from you till next week. But I have lost one far more agreeable, through my ignorance of your return. Had you not assured me that you could not possibly arrive in town till to-morrow, I should have had an excellent excuse for Louisa Erskyne. Dearest Rawleigh! are you not ashamed of your irresolution?"

"Not of my *irresolution*," replied Sir Brooke, involuntarily recurring to the unfair suspicions he had formed touching that secret so frankly announced. "But if I had indeed induced you to give up your engagement, Frederica, what would have become of the adventure?"

"Ah! I had totally forgotten it!—Well, after all,—as you *are* here again, and not very likely to make a second journey to Martwich, I am glad you did not recal me. I dare say I should have been in *your* way. I dare say you have been reading letters from Ruggs all day!"

"Not exactly!"

"At least you have not been riding with Lady Lotus,"—

"Do not swear it."

"But I will *protest* to you,—as Romeo say. For Lady Lotus herself,—*your* Lady Lotus,—*your* own dear Laura—"

"It is now my turn to protest,—"

"was the heroine of my adventure."

"I am disappointed. I expected something romantic or mysterious."

"You shall be amply gratified in both ways, if you have patience for my story. You are to know that by some strange mistake,—by the attraction I suppose which is called negative,—our carriage was posted on the course next to that of your fair heroine: a circumstance not likely to be agreeable to me at any time, and peculiarly unwelcome to-day, because she thought proper to amuse herself by making inquiries in her loudest voice, about my friend Mrs. Waddlestone—'my interesting friend Mrs. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone House;' to the infinite vexation of Louisa Erskyne, who saw that she attracted the notice of the neighbouring carriages, and to the infinite disgust of Lord Calder, who saw that she was only intent on mortifying and annoying me."

"Very silly, and very ill-bred. But take breath, you are on the verge of getting angry."

"Angry? I was *furious!*!" said Frederica, with a smile of the gentlest grace. "But really when I saw her little old quiz of a Sir Christopher put its yellow head out of the collar of its coat, like a tortoise on a sunshiny morning, I thought of *you*, Rawleigh, and forgave her. I do not wonder she dislikes me."

"I should, very much,—if I thought such a thing possible," said Rawleigh, kindly. "But go on."

"In the course of the morning, Lady Lotus's humour did not improve: for thanks to our popularity or our champagne, Mrs. Erskyne's carriage was surrounded with fashionable visitors, while that of the Lotus was surrounded with outriders, and nothing else."

"No asperity, Fred."

"I am very little inclined to be ill-natured; for she was a severe sufferer in the sequel. When the time came to put to the horses for our return to town, Lady Lotus, who had followed us down, and probably swallowed more dust than was agreeable to a person accustomed only to gold-dust, resolved to precede us on our way home; and I perceived her whisper to her servants, and her servants to the post-boys."

"Giving them orders to take the lead?"

"Exactly!—but without perceiving that the position in which the carriages stood, rendered it impossible to extricate either, without some temper of—much danger. The moment her horses were set in motion, our wheels became locked; and while Louisa and I screamed to them to stop, Lady Lotus kept urging them on. At length, one or two taxed carts round us made off, to leave room for mischief. I was terrified to death!"

"Foolish woman!"

"I trust *that* is intended for Laura? But you do not appear alarmed? I have a strong inclination to leave off, like Scheherazade, by way of retribution."

"How can I feel alarmed? Are you not safe by my side?"

"But how do you know that poor Lady Lotus is not dying of her contusions at the inn at Esher?"

"I have too much confidence in your Christian mercy, to be apprehensive."

"Well then, the affair ended by the two carriages being dragged down the hill together; the horses plunging and the inmates shrieking; till at length Sir Christopher's wheel came off in the struggle; and when I had courage to open my eyes after the crash, I saw Mr. Vaux trying to lift up the overturned barouche; while Lord Putney was assisting Lady Lotus out of the dust, and a stranger was trying to persuade the little old man—who was rolled up like

the millepedes,—to uncurl himself and own he was unhurt, which fortunately he could do with a very safe conscience."

"What an absurd affair. I thought Lady Lotus had more sense. But what became of them, for I conclude their carriage was too much broken to take them back to town."

"We were in a horrible fright lest we should be obliged to crowd them into ours; when I had the satisfaction of hearing the stranger offer them the use of his phaeton."

"But who and what were the stranger and his phaeton?"

"Alike dark, handsome, and mysterious. The carriage, however, was new, and its owner older than Lord Calder. Both had been stationed close before us on the course, and formed a subject of conjecture to us, in our intervals of idleness. We could not understand how a person so distinguished-looking could be a total stranger to our whole party."

"And did you make out?—Have you discovered this great unknown?"

"Not in the least; though, to gratify our curiosity, we persuaded him to accept the vacant seat in our carriage as far as where he was engaged to dinner; and I had the affliction of seeing his phaeton drive off, with Lady Lotus sobbing, and Sir Christopher as dumb as a dormouse, without the possibility of inquiring to whom she was indebted for so much good-nature."

"But in a half-hour's drive, surely Mrs. Erskyne and yourself were enabled to discover his name?"

"No! our handsome stranger proved to be well-informed, well-bred, and intelligent. But whether a Duke incognito, or the King's head-cook, remains a problem."

"But if a man of much consideration, Calder must have known him by sight?"

"And so he did, perfectly, but could not recollect where his person had become familiar to him. Mr. Vaux, too, remembered having repeatedly met him. He knew *me*, too, by name, for when he first came up to our carriage, immediately after the accident, and found me crying, he exclaimed, 'Pray Lady Rawleigh do not alarm yourself, your friends are more frightened than hurt.'"

"And you are *sure* you never saw this captivating personage before?" said Sir Brooke, looking fixedly at his wife.

"Quite certain—or I must have been struck by his very superior attractions."

"Miss Elbany was right this morning, Frederica! You certainly are candid amid all your indiscretions."

"Miss Elbany venture a remark on my conduct? How extremely

impertinent! And this morning? You told me you had not seen mamma."

"I did not disturb Lady Launceston. But I sat in Charles-street nearly an hour."

"You must have found the society of that girl extremely attractive. What could she find to say that lasted a whole hour?"

"To utter your praises!"

"I am highly flattered by her officious politeness. I should be obliged to her to find a more willing theme for her encomiums."

"My dear, you are far from just towards that poor girl. As she herself observed, you have done nothing but insult her ever since you arrived in town."

"She contrived then to mingle *some* blame in her prolix eulogies? I am beginning to wonder less that you did not stop the carriage this morning, now I find you had so excellent an occasion to amuse yourself. Even Ruggs's accounts do not rival the attractions of Miss Elbany."

"As I told you before, you are strangely prejudiced against that poor girl; and only because she is twice as handsome, clever, and agreeable, as any woman we meet in society. It is not her fault that your mother is so partial to her, and Launceston so much in love with her. But I shall certainly take him to task the first time I get hold of him alone. For if, as you say, he is engaged to this tallow-chandler's daughter, he has no right to sport as he does with Lucy's feelings."

"How do you know he sports with her?—Was Launceston in Charles-street this morning?"

"No!—we were quite alone."

What angry rejoinder might have broken from the lovely lips of Frederica, it is impossible to guess, had not Martin at that moment arrived to take away the tray.

By way of exhausting her vein of displeasure on some more legitimate subject, she now examined Mrs. Waddlestone's card of invitation with an air of as much abhorrence as if it had been steeped in the unctuous cauldron of her husband. With Sir Brooke's sanction, she instantly filled up the blanks of a formal card of refusal, to be despatched as early as possible on the morrow.

CHAPTER XIX.

I oft have heard him say how he admired
 Men of the large profession, who could speak
 To every cause, and things mere contraries,
 Till they were hoarse again.

JONSON'S " VOLPONE."

It is a remarkable circumstance that the transition from the electoral body to the senate, from the population to the legislation, from the taxee to the taxor, from the licentious to the licensed proser, produces a much greater change in any man who is likely to pass through the House with as little notice as a turnpike-bill, than in one whose qualifications are of a nature to attract the attention and admiration of king, lords, and commons. Fox or Sheridan, Canning or Peel, may have been scarcely conscious of this change in their estate; for, whether representing or represented, their eminence is unquestionable. But the change produced in the tone of a Sir Brooke Rawleigh, by the letters M. and P. in appendix to his name, is unmistakeable.

The honourable member for Martwich, though a man of good abilities—*good*, because equal to every demand arising in the station of life allotted to him by Providence—was far from a phenomenon. Gifted with a sound head and sound heart, he was as little likely to attract the attention of the world by excesses or absurdities, as by marvellous intellectual endowments; and, though no more than on a par with four out of eight men of his condition, he never said a silly thing or was guilty of an exceptionable action. Happy the state which boasts a majority of such citizens!

There is no country in Europe where the average excellence of education redeems and cultivates mediocrity of mind into such valuable qualities as England. A free government and liberal faith, by affording exercise to the faculties produced, combine to elevate them into importance; and the man who, in France, would become a sensualist—in Austria, a brute—in Spain, a bigot—in Italy, a villain or nonentity—is trained by the English system of education into a useful country gentleman, and a valuable member of society.

Such was Sir Brooke Rawleigh. Such had he been ever taught to believe himself by the esteem of his neighbourhood, the respect of his household, the admiration of Lady Derenzy and her sister, and the favourable acceptance of society at large. But the main point of his intellectual deficiency was want of decision. He had

the elements of judgment in his mind—clearness of perception and a strong sense of right. But he wanted the power of bringing them together for use, and the self-reliance which affixes the die of currency to real ability. When the Emperor Joseph II. despatched his edicts to the states of his extensive empire, two couriers were always kept ready, in order that the second might convey the rescindment of the first rescript; and Sir Brooke never hazarded an important opinion, without the addition of a species of "errors excepted" clause, destroying the whole authority of his words.

But so long as his career was limited to a subordinate march of existence, where his infirmity of purpose was unimportant to the world, and therefore invisible to himself, he remained on easy terms with his own understanding: checking Mr. Ruggs, lecturing the improvident Launceston, gratifying his neighbours, Lord Lawford and Lord Huntingfield, by an equality of mediocrity, and amazing Mrs. Martha Derenzy and her coterie with his prodigious information on agricultural and political topics. The rector of Rawleighford, Dr. Fisher, was the only person capable of appreciating the deficiency in the mental powers of his patron. But, like most men who have achieved the dignity of the buzz wig, he attributed the fault to the extreme youth of Sir Brooke, whom, at nine-and-twenty, his septuagenarian soul regarded as a promising boy. He was, besides, a worthy man and conscientious divine; and was too well aware of the value of his young friend's moral qualities, not to esteem him infinitely more than if he had been capable of a political squib or popular romance.

But the time was now come for Sir Brooke to form a painful appraisement of his own powers; and perhaps there is no species of humiliation so grievous to a man's feelings, and so pernicious to his temper, as that which arises without the malicious intervention of others. He had expected to derive considerable self-importance from his seat in Parliament. Instead of which, he became lowered in his own esteem on taking his place among his peers. A country gentleman of good estate, living at the end of his own avenue—a Colossus to his tenants, a Solon to his steward, a Sir Charles Grandison to his parsonage—is at once the most independent and most self-satisfied of human beings. He may exclaim from his library chair,

"Here is my throne,—let kings come bow to it!"

But this pleasing delusion ends at Hyde-park-corner. Once installed in the Chapel of St. Stephen's, he becomes a small item in the great account. Napoleon invited Talma to Erfurt to "act before a pitful of kings;" and a country member finds himself reduced to his natural level in a houseful of squires.

Those whose spirit is unduly repressed in one place, usually award themselves a liberal compensation by its exercise in another. In proportion, accordingly, as Sir Brooke Rawleigh became conscious of his political subordination in the House of Commons, he began to exercise his consequence in his house in Bruton-street. He was not conscious of the alteration in his views and demeanour, or that he ran some risk of growing disagreeable and ridiculous. Nor did the partial affection of his wife admit of her becoming more enlightened than himself in this particular. But one consequence of the change operated in his domestic position by his senatorial duties, could escape neither Frederica's notice nor her regret; namely, the daily-recurring absence insured by the diligent attention of the new member to his public duties, and the hurry and weariness of spirit with which he returned to the comforts of home and society of his wife. No wonder that she should seek refuge from the dulness of her deserted dwelling in the amusements fitted to her age; in the animated sallies of Mrs. Erskyne's conversation, and the flattering blandishments of Lord Calder's devotion.

It was some days after the adventure and misadventure of the races, that Lady Rawdon, among the duties of her morning drive, projected a visit to Mrs. Martha Derenzy; an incident which usually acted as a soporific for the rest of the day. If Lady Launceston's mansion exhibited the stillness of elegant valetudinarianism, Mrs. Martha's was more than equally paralyzed by the stagnation of dulness and mediocrity. The house itself stood on what is called the shady side of the street, to avoid the rare enlivenment of a straggling sunbeam; the attendants were cased in suits of sober pepper-and-salt; the floors were carpeted with grey druggst. A moping linnet hung in one corner of the sepulchral drawing-room, apparently infected by the dinginess of its cage, and sobriety of its attendants. Two portraits of Luther and Melancthon were suspended in black frames from the slate-coloured wall; and in the gloomiest corner of this gloomy apartment, at a table covered with faded green baize, sat Mrs. Martha Derenzy and her worsted work!

It was not that her three thousand per annum was so exclusively devoted to the support of the charitable institutions in whose printed lists she was somewhat fond of perusing her own name, that produced these penurious characteristics. But she was an enemy to all innovation. Undisturbed by the cares of matrimony and maternity, she had vegetated for the space of sixty-four years in that very abode; and considered it a sort of respectful testimony to the memory of the old dowager grandmother by whom she had

been brought up, to maintain everything precisely in the order she had noticed it half a century before. Mrs. Martha was careful that even the drugget, the baize, and the linnet, when worn out by the natural progress of years, should be renewed in the exact shade of their original dinginess.

In such a spot as this, the youthful beauty of Lady Rawleigh seemed to acquire an almost unnatural radiance, and her voice awoke an echo of gladness such as those walls were rarely taxed to reverberate. Nor was the old lady herself insensible to the charm. The only feelings of sensibility in which she had ever been known to indulge, were lavished on her only sister, the mother of Sir Brooke, from whom they had been transferred to her exemplary nephew; while the entire respect and wonderment of her mind were engrossed by Lady Derenzy, the wife and widow of her elder brother. It was the knowledge of this partiality which had postponed Frederica's visit to Queen Anne-street, ever since the fatal offence of the drawing-room.

"Well, my dear Lady Rawleigh," said she, replacing her spectacles in their well-worn morocco case, "I was afraid you had forgotten me. I have never once seen you to wish you joy on our dear Brooke's advancement. I was saying last night to Miss Hunter, during the deal—(for I generally manage to make up my cassino-table, notwithstanding the gay doings that are going on)—said I, any one might think my niece had got into Parliament instead of my nephew, for I have quite lost sight of her. Miss Hunter could not for the life of her help laughing."

"I have been half afraid to call here," said Frederica, frankly, "being aware that I was so unfortunate as to offend Lady Derenzy in the affair about Mrs. Waddlestone. Nothing would grieve me more than to displease any of my husband's relations. But in this instance I had to choose between wounding the feelings of my brother, and losing the good opinion of a mere connexion."

"And your decision, Lady Rawleigh, did you honour. Our dear Sophronia is a noble creature. I do not suppose that the court of Great Britain has at any time boasted among its aristocracy so brilliant an example of beauty, elegance, talents, accomplishments, and high-breeding; and I am well aware that whenever my sister-in-law deigns to show herself in society, every one is anxious to receive the law from her lips on all points of fashionable etiquette."

Lady Rawleigh with difficulty repressed a smile, as she contrasted this florid family portrait with the harsh reality of Lady Derenzy's withered person and obsolete address.

"But Sophronia has her prejudices. Engrossed by her studies and contemplations, it would be disagreeable to her to live (as I

do) in the centre of the gay world; and it would be requiring too much of her to conform (as I do) to the habits of the new generation. When my sister-in-law expressed her displeasure at the condescension you were pleased to show to Mrs. Waddlestone, she was not aware, my dear, that you were first tempted to make her acquaintance at our cousin Mrs. Luttrell's; or that it was *myself* who engaged you to pay her the first visit. All this has been properly explained; and Sophronia has restored you to favour, on learning that you were solely influenced in your conduct by deference to the opinion of the elder branches of the family."

Frederica was not quite prepared for the turn given by Mrs. Derenzy to her proceedings. But she was willing to accept an interpretation that rescued for the present the name of her brother from implication in the business. Having found from Launceston's confessions that he had not yet made his proposals to the soap-boiler, but was admitted into the family merely as a lover on probation, she was still in hopes that some more honourable method might be discovered to retrieve the fortunes of the spendthrift, than that of dishonouring his family by an alliance of so unsatisfactory a nature.

"And now, my dear madam, I am come, after all, only to bid you good bye," said Lady Rawleigh, when she could gain an interval from Miss Hunter's sayings and Mrs. Watt's doinga. "I am going to-morrow out of town."

"Indeed? When the late Mr. Rawleigh sat for Droitwich, my poor dear sister made it a point never to leave London till the end of the session."

"I have no thoughts of Warwickshire at present. I am only projecting a visit of a few days to my aunt Olivia, who has a villa in Essex; and is about to give a breakfast at which she wishes me to preside. We were anxious that Sir Brooke should accompany me. But he assures me it is impossible; and Lady Olivia is so eager for the *féte*, that I am under the necessity of leaving him."

Frederica was surprised to observe that this intelligence produced in Mrs. Derenzy something more nearly resembling agitation than she could have anticipated. The old lady opened her spectacle-case—shut it again—displaced her balls of worsted—half rose from her seat, and after various little preparatory hemms observed in reply, "I think, my dear niece, though we have not yet been quite a year acquainted, you will do me the justice to acknowledge that you have never observed any symptoms of mischief-making in my disposition."

Lady Rawleigh, somewhat awed by this oracular preamble, assented with a clear conscience to the proposition.

"Though I have myself thought fit to abstain from the marriage state," said Mrs. Martha, "no woman in this world is more profoundly penetrated with the sacredness of the institution, or the sin of attempting to disturb the confidence and happiness of wedlock."

Frederica, who began to suspect that Rawleigh had commissioned his aunt to read her a little lecture on the subject of Lord Calder's attentions, prepared herself to listen with becoming deference to an exercise of family eloquence which, however superfluous, was well-meant, and inoffensive. But no sooner had she placed herself in a posture of attention, than Mrs. Derenzy inquired whether she happened to be intimately acquainted with Lady Huntingfield.

"She is one of my Rawleighford neighbours, and a person whom I highly respect. But I fear I am not a favourite. I suspect I have taken a place which she always wished might fall to the lot of her daughter, Lady Margaret Fieldham."

"Quite a mistake, I assure you! She was saying here, only yesterday, that she was thankful her daughter's happiness had not been compromised by a union with my nephew."

"She might have waited for some expression of Rawleigh's inclinations on such a subject."

"Ah! my dear!" said Mrs. Derenzy, shaking her head.

"You quite alarm me!"

"I fear he has been *much* to blame."

"Who has been to blame? Not Sir Brooke, I am certain."

"Your infatuation does *you* honour. But it only aggravates his fault."

"Dear Mrs. Derenzy,—pray be more explicit."

"Young men, I have always heard, *will* be young men. But I must say I *did* entertain a different opinion of my nephew. So lately married,—so charming a wife!"

"My dear madam, you will drive me to distraction by all this mystery. What *has* Rawleigh been about? What mischief has Lady Huntingfield been inventing concerning my husband?"

"My dear niece, Lady Huntingfield is incapable of a malicious action. She is a very serious woman; the best friend and neighbour my poor dear late sister ever had. It was solely a view to such interference on my part as might perhaps work a reformation in the conduct of my deluded nephew, that induced her to favour me with her confidence."

It was now Lady Rawleigh's turn to seize on the spectacle-case, which she opened and shut with unconscious irritation.

"If I am not mistaken, my dear, there is a young person of some personal attractions resident in the family of your mamma?"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Frederica, starting up. "It is not

possible that Rawleigh can have attached himself to that horrible Miss Elbany?"

"The very person!" ejaculated Mrs. Martha.

"I do not believe a single word of it," cried Lady Rawleigh, with spirit.

"Nay! my dear niece—far be it from me to shake your amiable incredulity. I respect your blindness. I love your obstinacy on such an occasion. Nor would any circumstance less peremptory than your departure from town, leaving my nephew open to the allurements of that misguided young woman, have unsealed my lips. It is not that I suspect any positive guilt, any moral turpitude in their conduct. Still, decorum is to be respected, Lady Rawleigh—decorum is to be respected. And indeed, my dear, it does *not* look well for the credit of either Lady Launceston's house or Sir Brooke's character, that my nephew should be caught in the act of imprinting—but spare me the rest! Let us gloss over an incident so unbecoming."

"No! no! pray speak out," panted Frederica. "Since you have opened my eyes, oblige me by letting me know the worst. Who is the person that was so fortunate as to witness—" she stopped, and burst into tears.

"Oh! dear—dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Derenzy. "What a pity to agitate yourself in this silly manner for a trifle. After all, it might have been only an act of politeness on my nephew's part. To be sure one must feel that it does seem a leetle odd that Lady Huntingfield, and the butler, and poor quiet innocent Lady Margaret Fieldham, should happen to have entered the drawing-room at the very moment of such a crisis. And silly enough, I understand, did they all look. Lady Huntingfield declares that *she* never received a salute of that description in the whole course of her life."

"All this must be explained!" cried Frederica, drying her eyes and rising from her seat. "I will go to mamma,—I will appeal to Rawleigh—I will not tamely submit to—"

"Hush, hush! my dear niece, be pacified!" said Mrs. Martha, offering her a bottle of eau-de-luce, which looked like a wedding present from Sir Charles Grandison to Harriet Byron. "Remember, I must not have a single syllable of this business divulged. Remember, I have confided it to you with a full trust in your honour. Reflect, my dear, on what might be the consequences of a disclosure. A duel between your deluded husband and Lord Huntingfield—a separation between Lord Huntingfield and his lady—an irreconcileable quarrel between my nephew and myself; and last of all, this giddy young woman—who after all may be more indiscreet than culpable—thrown out of bread."

"Thrown out of bread!" reiterated Lady Rawleigh, who at that moment could have found it in her heart to order her rival thrown out of the window.

"For my own sake, I really must insist on your silence; and for yours, accept an old woman's advice, and do not leave London. Do not again expose your husband to the snares of a Dalilah."

"I will obey your commands, and accept your counsel," said Frederica, eager to get beyond the reach of observation, and indulge the emotions struggling in her bosom. "Good bye, Mrs. Derenzy; Good bye!" and without listening to the addenda which Rawleigh's aunt seemed anxious to append to the catalogue of his enormities, she hurried down stairs at a rate which caused the reverend domestics to tremble with consternation, and on getting into her carriage, ordered it to the extremity of the Regent's-park. Like Cassius, she longed to "weep her spirit from her eyes." Unconscious of the vehemence with which she drew down the blinds, and threw herself into a corner of the chariot, she felt nothing but the tumultuous beating of her heart; she heard nothing but an ocean-like hissing, as if some heavy piece of ordnance had just pealed in her ears.

Such hypocrisy—such treachery!—Rawleigh, so severe in his strictures on laxity of morals in other people, professing such devotion of attachment to herself, such respect for her mother, such deference to public opinion. A second Angelo—a vile impostor—a traitor to her faithful love.

And how, after all, was she to act in such a dilemma? Was there one human creature to whom she could confide the frailty of her husband and her own despair? It was needless of Mrs. Derenzy to qualify the mischief she had made, by exacting a promise of secrecy. Worlds would not have tempted her to utter a syllable in disparagement of her once loved, her faithless Brooke. Not that she felt the slightest displeasure against the officious aunt. She was far from cherishing Othello's opinion that "It is better to be much abused than but to know't a little." She resolved to know all—to see all—to assure herself of the worst by the utmost precaution of observation. And then—no matter!—the time, the occasion would bring its own tremendous verdict on the transaction.

Next to the impulse of concealing her husband's dishonour, was that of disguising her own sufferings; and it is astonishing how potently female pride will operate in the suppression of even jealousy. Lady Rawleigh had been long engaged to visit Sir Thomas Lawrence's gallery that morning, introduced by Lord Calder, and accompanied by Lady Rochester and Mrs. Erskyne. To make her appearance before these heartless people, as a poor

weeping, neglected, injured wife, was out of the question. No! no!—She applied her handkerchief to her eyes for the last time, drew up the blinds to refresh them with a current of air, and rehearsing a little hysterical laugh as a trial of self-possession on passing Gloucester Gate, desired the coachman, in a voice like the croak of a wood-pigeon, to drive to Russell-square.

Lord Calder was conducting his sister up the steps of Sir Thomas's door, at the moment she arrived; and on entering the gallery they found Louisa Erskyne already waiting.

"You are indisposed?" said Lord Calder, in an anxious undertone to Lady Rawleigh, as they entered the room, in which the great artist had not yet made his appearance. "I fear you were persuaded to stay too late last night at Lady Blanche Thornton's—Nothing so injudicious as to protract one night's amusement so as to interfere with the pleasures of the following day.—When next you find yourself yielding to the importunities of an officious hostess, remember the advice of an old epicurean and your headache of to-day,—and resist!"

Sir Thomas Lawrence, who boasted a friend as well as patron in the munificent Calder, now made his appearance; addressing his attentions to Lady Rochester and Mrs. Erskyne, with whom he was acquainted; and accompanying his lordship's presentation to Lady Rawleigh with a degree of scrutiny, plainly betraying that his painter's eye had been favourably prepared for her beauty. Though too cautious to allow even a glance of disappointment to escape him, it is probable that Frederica's swollen eyelids impressed him with a very moderate estimate of her charms. Except in the instance of Lebrun's celebrated picture of Madame de la Vallière weeping in Carmelite costume over the jewels she is about to resign, so lachrymose a visage never occupied the attention of a painter!—But scarcely was the introduction over, when the little party was startled by the arrival of an intruder. On turning from a half-finished picture of Lady Barbara Dynley, Frederica observed Sir Thomas in the act of shaking hands with their mysterious Hampton friend; while Lord Calder was receiving his bow of distant recognition with an air of gratified urbanity. Could Lady Rawleigh have effaced from recollection the odious incident recently engraven there by Mrs. Derenzy, she would have now been happy. For till the moment of her discoveries concerning Miss Elbany and the faithless Rawleigh, nothing had been nearer her heart than to renew her acquaintance with the mysterious stranger.

CHAPTER XX.

After her looks grew cheerful, and I saw
A smile shoot graceful upward from her eyes;
As if they gained a victory o'er grief.

SHIRLEY.

NOTHING promised at present in favour of an elucidation. Sir Thomas Lawrence, perceiving from the recognition among his visitors that a previous acquaintance existed, did not attempt an introduction; and though Mrs. Eraskyne, whose curiosity was piqued on the subject even more than that of Frederica, lent a vigilant ear to ascertain whether any sound resembling your grace, or your lordship, escaped the painter's lips in addressing his anonymous guest, nothing transpired. But it was evident that the stranger and the artist were on terms of too cordial a friendship to admit of the formalities of conventional deference. Mrs. Eraskyne still felt at liberty to believe him a royal highness, if she chose. In the mean time, with the restless coquetry distinguishing all her movements, she attached herself to Sir Thomas, as to the lion of the moment; while Lady Rochester was looking at the pictures through an eyeglass, to ascertain the proportions in which carmine and vermillion were mingled to produce the complexion of the Duchess of Richmond's exquisite portrait, she forcibly withdrew his attention from the group on which it would have been more usefully and satisfactorily bestowed; and whose critical progress through the gallery he was compelled to hear in tantalizing fragments. He perceived that Lord Calder was exerting his conversational powers to the utmost.

There can scarcely be a greater misfortune to a man and those with whom he is destined to live in contact, than to be of sufficient importance, whether from rank or opulence, to sanction his being disagreeable whenever it suits his convenience. Lord Calder was gifted with considerable mental powers, enhanced by cultivation, and prepared for active service by extensive intercourse with society. He was an elegant scholar—had read much—could talk well and plausibly on most subjects; and if averse to profound argument, what was to be expected from a man with eighty thousand a-year, one of the oldest patents in the peerage, unimpaired health, and an unencumbered person?

But, unfortunately, he found so many persons content to accept in conversation the minimum of his faculties, eager to applaud his slipshod commonplace, and extol with ecstasy his poorest attempts at pleasantry, that he experienced no temptation to tax his intel-

lectual stores. Like Quain in his barn days, he was satisfied to play Othello *white* to a meagre audience. Nor was his lordship less economical of his powers of pleasing, than of his powers of entertaining. He was one of those individuals designated as "not generally agreeable;"—a definition usually applied to selfish, ill-tempered people, who are of sufficient consequence to disregard the feelings of their associates.

He was not, however, enamoured of his solitary reign.—Like Selkirk on his island, or Haroun Al Raschid on his throne, he was disgusted with his inert supremacy; and it was delightful to him to encounter an auditor worthy his exertions,—a combatant deserving his lance. On finding in the stranger a man of polished mind and exquisite judgment, he hastened to seize his idle spear; and with the greater eagerness, that Frederica's presence would animate the fray. Alas! how little did he imagine that her mind was wandering between Mrs. Derenzy's slate-coloured drawing-room, and the revolting scene of Sir Brooke Rawleigh's furtive indiscretions!

"I own it provokes me," said Lord Calder, glancing from the Satan of the president's gallery to the portrait of Mrs. Locke which still graced the easel, "to hear the general outcry raised against portrait-painting, in favour of the historical school; and the regrets annually doled out at the exhibition of the Royal Academy, that our gifted friend should have restricted his abilities to the production of such works as this exquisite head."

"Professional critics," said the unknown visitor, "are seldom disinterested. The progress of our National School of Art is of little importance in their eyes; or they would admit that in perfecting the department of portrait-painting, we assure the first step towards the establishment of a higher order of art. It is as the acquirement of facility of versification to a poet. Our century has scarcely yet reached the dignity of historical composition. But the rudiments of such an achievement exist just now in England with a far more brilliant promise than in any continental country."

"The merit of the English school of portrait-painting is as honestly recognised at Rome as the eminence of Thorwaldsen or Canova," said Lord Calder.—"I have seen the Italian cognoscenti hanging over Lawrence's miraculous picture of Gonsalvi, as if to penetrate the secrets of his art."

"And yet there are strong opponents in Italy to the English tone of colouring; men who look upon Rubens as a caricaturist, and regard both Reynolds and Lawrence as modified imitators of his extravagance. They talk of 'fluttering,' and 'patchiness,' and 'want of harmony,' and say that such vivid tints are neither to be found in the faces of Titian's nor of nature's manufacture. And

they are right!—Their Italian experience has never established such precedents in their mind. Their fervid skies and inert habits of life are little calculated to produce a similar freshness."

"England certainly monopolizes the charm of such complexions as these," said Lord Calder, looking round on the female portraits, but eventually directing his glance towards Frederica's blushing face. "The diet of the French,—the stoves of the Germans and Russians,—the atmosphere of the Italians,—are fatal to the bloom of a female face, and the manly vigour of a masculine countenance. Whereas, field exercise and the simplicity of our mode of nourishment produce the highest tone of colouring. Even the most beautiful faces one sees on the Continent, are either bronzed by the sunshine of Italy, or pasty and heavy from the oppression of over-heated apartments. Not a country in Europe where youth lingers so long upon the countenance, as England."

"I perfectly agree with you," said the stranger, with the air of a travelled man. "And exquisite as we must admit the portraits of the Venetian school, as well as those of Raphael, Leonardo, and Guido, we may also assure ourselves that such portraits would not have been painted in England; and that the great masters of Italy must have adopted a totally different tone and mode of colouring, had they become acquainted with nature in a harvest-field on the banks of the Severn, or a drawing-room on the banks of the Thames."

"This deduction is confirmed by the works of modern English artists who have been some time resident abroad," said Lord Calder.

"Vandyke affords perhaps the happiest medium," said the stranger; "a man acquainted with nature in all her disguises, yet apparently born only to perpetuate the fairest, noblest, and most poetical of her human productions."

"In one point," observed Lord Calder, lowering his voice to a confidential pitch, "in one point, without instituting a comparison touching the mere execution of their pictures, we must acknowledge the superiority of Charles's artist over our own. Vandyke,—the most courtly of painters,—whose subjects appear to stand on a velvet footcloth to the sound of trumpets,—has the art of giving dignity without intellectuality. His princes are lofty and graceful, without displaying more speculation in their eyes than is hereditary with the right divine. But our friend Lawrence is too apt to endow his sitters with his own elegance of mind. All his female portraits beam with the sensibility of Psyche, and his male countenances appear instinct with genius."

"He has certainly irradiated the ponderous stupidity of more

than one lordly visage," said the stranger, with a smile. "But look at Raeburn's portraits. Accustomed to the intense and contemplative gaze of his Edinburgh contemporaries, he makes his lordlings look as if resolving a problem; while we involuntarily associate a pair of blue stockings with the fairest of his female faces."

"An insurmountable blemish!" cried Lord Calder; again directing his eyes towards the pure unpretending loveliness of Frederica; as if anxious to include her in their discourse, and unwilling to lose, even for the sake of an enlightened companion, the smiles of such a face. But Lady Rawleigh, though she fixed her dim eyes towards the masterpieces before her, exhibited no interest in their excellence, or curiosity touching the conversation by which her companions were engrossed. Notwithstanding the look of admiration with which her movements were watched by the stranger, she could not realize her desire of appearing cheerful.

"Lady Rawleigh seems indisposed this morning?" he inquired of Lord Calder, in a low voice.

"The fatigues of London dissipation seldom allow us the enjoyment of beholding beauty in the full measure of its mischief," was the reply.

"And yet," said the stranger, "a woman so lovely in person and disposition is too rare a treasure to be resigned to the risk—"

"Of taking cold on quitting a crowded ball-room? I quite agree with you," said Lord Calder; and he immediately turned away to examine a cartoon which Sir Thomas had drawn from one of his valuable portfolios, in elucidation of some point in dispute between himself and his fair companions.

There was something in the sensibility felt or affected by the stranger in speaking of Lady Rawleigh so discordant to his feelings, that he began to think him a much less agreeable man than he had done ten minutes before. What was the wife of Sir Brooke to him, that he should presume to discuss the merits of her character or attractions of her person? It was an unbecoming and presumptuous familiarity—a remarkable proof of ill-breeding. Such is usually the tenacity of the unprivileged adorer. The father, brother, and husband, is gratified by the homage rendered to the object of his affection. But the illicit lover regards every admirer as a rival—every approving smile as indicative of pretensions as condemnable as his own.

It was probably this change of feeling which induced Lord Calder to mark, by his apologies to their accomplished host for their intrusion on his time, that he considered their visit to have exceeded

its privilege; and Frederica, delighted at the prospect of release, and scarcely conscious whether they had been inspecting a cabinet of natural history, or a gallery of pictures, hastened to take a courteous leave. It was evidently the intention both of the stranger and of Lord Calder to attend her to her carriage; but while the former, by his more active agility, contrived to keep pace with her animated movements, his lordship lost, in a fruitless attempt to follow them, the opportunity of inquiring from Sir Thomas Lawrence the name of his rival.

Nor had Mrs. Erakyne been more active. The moment she discovered that Frederica, and not herself, was the object of the stranger's assiduities, she became perfectly indifferent whether he were the Cham of Tartary or Dr. Francia.

But tedious as had been to Lady Rawleigh the task of dissimulation, among her fashionable friends, a far more serious trial awaited her arrival at home.

It was Saturday--ex-official Saturday;

When Houses pause that Senators may dine;

and Sir Brooke, to whom a peremptory occupation was so novel a restraint, had determined to taste the first fruits of his holiday, in company with a jovial crew. In the course of the morning he had invited Lord Launceston, Sir Robert Morse, Mr. Fieldham, Colonel Rhyse, and Sir Mark Milman, to dine with him in Bruton-street; and Frederica, with all her oppression of spirit and struggling tears, found herself required to play the courteous hostess, at the forfeiture of being taxed with ungraciousness towards her husband's guests. She might quit them early, indeed, on pretext of the Opera; though even that alternative presented a miserable prospect to her aching head and heart. But what else remained to be done? If she decided on finishing the evening with Mrs. Derenzy, she knew she must endure fifteen editions of the unwelcome narrative of Rawleigh's infidelity. If she determined on visiting her mother, she must be humiliated by contact with the partner of his guilt.

Nor, with all her self-governance, could she succeed in disguising her indisposition from the scrutiny of her visitors. She was loaded with importunate sympathy, sickened with the suggestion of nostrums; and so much was said in the tedious half-hour preceding the announcement of dinner, concerning her change of looks, that could she have banished from her remembrance her visit to Queen Anne-street, she might have been tempted to apprehend fatal effects from her chain of connexion through Lady Olivia Tadcaster, with the infected cabin of Captain Mopaley of the Scarmouth Castle.

"So you have been at Lawrence's this morning?" inquired Lord Launceston of his sister, soon after they were seated at table.

"Indeed?" exclaimed Rawleigh. "You never told me of that visit, Frederica. Are you going to sit for another picture?"

"Not at present," said Lady Rawleigh, drily. "But how did you hear of it, William? Have you seen Louisa Erskyne?"

"No, the birds of the air brought it to my chamber; and even informed me that you encountered a mysterious gentleman in black, whom Mrs. Erskyne believes to be Satan, and whom Lord Calder supposes to be the author of Junius."

"And who is decidedly the most agreeable man I ever met," added Lady Rawleigh.

Every one at table was clamorous to inquire the name of the lucky mortal meriting such an encomium; and Sir Brooke became still more anxious, when he discovered that the stranger was no other than the hero of the races. But to the general demand, Frederica could only reply in her former words, that he was the most agreeable person with whom she had ever been in company.

"Your friends, Lord Calder and Mrs. Erskyne, are probably more fastidious," said Launceston with a smile.

"No! they are even more enthusiastic than myself."

"And you do not even know the name of this dangerous divinity?" asked Sir Robert Morse.

"I have little doubt," said Colonel Rhyse, with a demure smile, "that Lady Rawleigh's friend is Squire Rabbinab, the great Yankee carkilator, who is making a tour in England."

"Is your hero a tall dark man, with very white teeth, Lady Rawleigh?" inquired young Fieldham, who was on terms of less facetious familiarity than the rest of the party.

"Precisely. Perhaps you are acquainted with him?" said Frederica eagerly, while Sir Brooke suspended his operations on the saddle of mutton to listen to the reply.

"It *must* be the new Lord Vardington, who has been living on the continent ever since the peace of Amiens; and now, his cousin having broken his neck, has come into twenty thousand a-year and an Irish viscounty."

"Very strange!" said Sir Robert Morse. "A man of his rank living in emigration all the best years of his life. Very mysterious!"

"Perhaps he is a Jesuit?" observed Colonel Rhyse.

"Now my dear Rhyse,—now my good friend Morse," pleaded Sir Mark Milman, who had not hitherto taken his eyes off his plate, "what can it signify to either of you who or what this unlucky man may happen to be? If Lady Rawleigh has met with L—"

Vardington, and is captivated by his agreeable conversation (Rawleigh, I'll trouble you for some mutton,) why insinuate a disparaging opinion touching his habits or character? Do leave people to themselves; and not amuse yourself with placing them against their will in a magic lantern, to be danced up and down like the devil and the baker, for your own idle diversion."

"My dear Frederica, you see Mrs. Eraskyne was right," said Launceston provokingly. "Sir Mark Milman assures us that your gentleman in black was, after all, neither more nor less than the devil."

"I said no such thing!" cried Sir Mark, with his mouth full of salad.

"At what hour on Tuesday are we to find our way to Lady Olivia Tadcaster's?" asked Sir Robert Morse of Lady Rawleigh, in hopes to change the conversation.

"Frederica sleeps there on Monday night," answered Sir Brooke, with a similar intention. "Lady Olivia will not allow *her* to escape even the overture."

"No!" said Lady Rawleigh, attempting to assume an air of nonchalance. "I have altered my mind. I cannot consent to lose three days of London, in the height of the season, for this stupid *fête*. I have sent my excuses by to-day's post."

"Indeed?" cried her astonished husband. "Your resolution has been very suddenly taken. At breakfast, you seemed to anticipate much amusement from the project."

"My dearest Fred.," cried Launceston, setting down his untasted glass of champagne, "I very much fear you have been bewitched by the gentleman in black."

"It is scarcely kind to Lady Olivia to announce your intention of absenting yourself," said Mr. Fieldham. "You will spoil her party."

"I trust Lady Rawleigh will change her intention," observed Sir Brooke, with marital solemnity.

"No, indeed!" said Frederica, with a heightened complexion. "My mind is quite made up not to go into Essex."

"Then you will disoblige your aunt as well as myself."

"Do not submit to threats, Lady Rawleigh," exclaimed Colonel Rhyse, laughing. "Sir Brooke, I was going to ask to take wine with you. But you look so grave, that my conviviality is at fault."

"Nay," said Rawleigh, vexed that this conjugal difference of opinion should have occurred in presence of so many witnesses, "my grave looks are an argument in favour of more champagne. Launceston, Morse, pray join us."

But in spite of his attempts to be sociable, he could not recover himself while Frederica remained at table. To hear her pronounce so strange and resolute a determination, appeared to him the most inexplicable thing in the world. Lady Olivia Tadcaster's entertainment, though in reality devised to obliterate the recollection of her Czartobolozkna blunder, was ostensibly given in honour of Lady Rawleigh; who had appeared to enjoy the prospect of a *fête* in the arrangements of which her taste had been materially consulted. Was Lord Launceston's random supposition just?—Had the attractions of her new friend sufficed to determine her stay in town?—Or, could she not, for three short days, absent herself from the adulation of Lord Calder?

As the carriage drove from the door which conveyed his wife to the Opera, where he feared she would be gratified with the presence of one or both her favourites, poor Sir Brooke had little spirit to recommend his claret, or enter into the lively conversation of Rhyse and his brother-in-law. And while Lady Rawleigh was informing Mrs. Erskyne with an air of affected interest, that she had discovered their new acquaintance to be Lord Vardington, a newly inheriting Roman Catholic Viscount, her lord and master was tranquillizing his apprehensions by a secret vow that to Essex she should positively go, if his authority, and the wishes of her mother and brother, had any influence over her mind.

CHAPTER XXI.

Yet even her carriage is as far from coyness
As from immodesty. In play, in dancing,
In suffering courtship, in requiting kindness,
In use of places, hours, and companies,
Free as the sun, and nothing more corrupted.

CHAPMAN.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lady Rawleigh's disinclination to breathe in the same room with Miss Elbany, she did not forego her accustomed visit to Lady Launceston, after church on the following day; and having seated herself on her footstool beside her mother's sofa, who fancied she had been very busy reading one of Sherlock's sermons, and marked down the page as diligently as if she had really given her mind to the contents, Frederica forgot for a moment the uneasy feelings that were subdued by her recent act of devotion and present tenderness of mood. The Companion was occupied in her own apartment; and, for a wonder, Lady Launceston expressed no anxiety touching her absence.

After the news of the day, and an addition of two grains of soda instigated by Dr. Camomile in her ladyship's draughts had been gravely discussed, she suddenly exclaimed, "I grieve, my dear Frederica, to learn from your brother that you intend to disappoint poor Olivia of your company on Tuesday next?"

"I really do not feel equal to the exertion. I was never aware till lately of the exhaustion and weariness arising from dissipation."

My dear, you should see Dr. Camomile."

"No, I intend to give myself the relaxation of a week's idleness;—a much safer cure."

"But cannot you postpone it till after my sister's party? She will take it as a serious offence. And I must own, Fred., that my feelings will be hurt by your indifference to her wishes."

"My dear mamma, if *you* make a point of my going to Ash Bank, I will instantly recal my apologies."

"You see, love, Sir Brooke has been with me, this morning, to beg my interference. He will not hear of your staying away."

"Oh! Sir Brooks has been prompting you to influence me on the subject, has he?" exclaimed Frederica,—the quilled ruff of her chemisette vibrating with emotion. "Then I certainly will *not* go."

Lady Launceston was amazed by the unusual tone of obstinacy assumed by her daughter. "My dear Fred., you forget yourself," said she smiling. "You cannot wish to disoblige your husband for such a trifle?"

"Certainly not, certainly not! It is a *mere* trifle that Rawleigh should exercise his tyranny to get me out of the way, that he may follow his own disreputable pursuits during my absence," said poor Frederica, vexed out of her self-possession.

"What *are* you talking about?" cried her mother, more startled than if her salts' bottle had broken in her hand. "Rawleigh a tyrant? Rawleigh guilty of a bad action?—Frederica, I do not know you this morning."

"I wish I did not know myself!" cried her daughter, bursting into tears; "for I see nothing but misery awaiting me on every side."

"Fie! child, fie! Prosperous and fortunate as you are, it is tempting Providence to talk in this way. From the hour of your birth till now, you have never known misfortune; and your prospects are as bright as affection and affluence can make them. Thank God for them, my own dear girl,—as I do! Go home, and submit to your husband's authority. Do not, for a little irritation of temper, hazard an ungrateful feeling to Heaven, or an unacious action towards a man who dearly loves you."

When poor sleepy Lady Launceston roused herself on any grand family emergency to give utterance to her opinions, it was remarkable by how much good sense and good feeling they were influenced. It was not, however, surprising to Frederica, who knew the excellence and integrity of her mother's principles, and reverenced them the more that they were never brought forward for display, on trivial occasions. She was at all times touched by the sound of her mother's voice, when employed in a tone of admonition or reproach. And in the present instance, though her tears were deprived of much of their bitterness, they flowed anew, for having merited Lady Launceston's reproof.

"If you desire me, dear mamma, to go down to Ash Bank," said she at length, "I have never yet disobeyed you,—and never will. But I shall fulfil my duty with an aching heart. Tell me, however, one thing. Has Miss Elbany received an invitation,—and will you resign her company and allow her to accept it?"

"Ah! my sweet love,—now indeed you are becoming rational. Now I recognise my own Frederica. You feel that Lucy's society would make even the Ash Bank *séte* delightful."

"But shall you permit her to join the party?" persisted Lady Rawleigh, a little surprised that her mother should so completely misinterpret her feelings.

"I wish it were in my power to oblige you. But Lucy expressed last night her decided resolution to excuse herself; as she is sitting for a miniature to ornament my dressing-room."

"You yield to *her* objections then, while you consider my inclinations of no importance!" said Frederica, mortified to find that the little portrait of herself which had been recently finished, would find so unwelcome a companion.

"My dear,—the cases are wholly different! My poor humble Lucy will not be missed from the gay throng, which you well know is to be collected in your honour. Besides, your husband insists on your going; and you have no right to disobey him."

"In that case," said Frederica, rising from her stool with an air of offended dignity that only too well became her, "let Rawleigh enjoy his triumph. It will not do him half so much honour as *my* submission."

And having kissed and taken leave of her mother, she quitted the house. But not without whispering to herself, as she passed the threshold, that had she been aware of half the wickedness concentrated within the heart of man,—half the afflictions included in the chequered fortunes of the marriage state, she would never have resigned either the solace of her mother's affection, or the uneventful tranquillity of her mother's dwelling, to the usurpation of a Mir Lucy Elbany.

On her return home, she found Mr. Lexley seated with her husband on the drawing-room sofa; beating time on its damask cushions to the lengthsome periods of political eloquence with which he was stultifying the faculties of Sir Brooke previous to a regular attack on his vote, as assassins commence their operations with narcotics ere they venture on the stiletto; while her brother, in expectation of her return, was amusing himself with making pen-and-ink sketches of coaches and four in her blotting-book. All three rose on her entrance; and Sir Brooke, slyly directed a glance under her bonnet, to ascertain whether the atmosphere of St. George's church had effected any change in those stubborn feelings, in that levity of demeanour, which had sealed her lips on her return from the Opera the preceding night. On this point she did not prolong his suspense. Before Mr. Lexley could again possess himself of the button and ear of his victim,—before she had even accepted the chair rolled forward for her by her brother, she observed, "I find from mamma, Sir Brooke, that she is anxious I should not disappoint Lady Olivia on Tuesday next. I have therefore determined to revoke my excuse, and go down to Ash Bank to-morrow, according to my original intention."

"I am delighted to hear it," "You have decided very properly!" burst from her brother and husband, at the same moment.

"Perhaps I might be able to get away for a few hours?" hesitated Sir Brooke,—with an inquiring look towards Mr. Lexley.

"My dear Sir! you do not think of such a thing,—the great Distillery Bill!—"

"Perhaps, Fred., as you will not be able to use Mameluke for two or three days to come," interrupted her brother, "you would not object to lend him to Miss Elbany during your absence? I have obtained my mother's acquiescence."

"Arrange it among you. I have no wishes, no opinions, no objections. If I had, they would be little regarded," said Frederica, throwing herself listlessly in her chair, as she thought of the companion, lounging on her favourite Mameluke among the green lanes at Willesden; with Launceston's sweet looks on one side, and Rawleigh's sweet words on the other; while she was pining away her hours at Lady Olivia's villa.

"Then you have no scruple in disappointing Lady Olivia?—You have made up your mind not to go to Ash Bank?" she whispered to her brother.

"I never distress myself by making up my mind. There are only three things to which the term 'making up' is ever applied by human beings; namely, their minds,—accounts,—and medicines;—three nauseous operations, and quite out of my way."

"But do you not intend to join my aunt's party?"

"Certainly not! I detest the labour of villa entertainments; more particularly where I must play the Janus part of guest and host at the same time. I oblige Lady Olivia Tadcaster very materially by leaving the arrangement of my affairs in her hands, and am therefore exonerated from the perils of her truffled turkies stuffed with India rubber, and maraschino flavoured with prussic acid. Besides, she has thought proper to invite the Waddlestones, and all Spitalfields is already in a ferment with Mrs. W.'s preparations."

"But surely if you love Leonora well enough to devote your future life to her society, you will not avoid her presence at a *dejeuner*?"

"Quite a different affair. In transplanting Leonora to Marston Park, I shall take care to exclude all the weeds with which my rose unique is surrounded. But I have not nerve to exhibit myself to such people as your Lady Blanche Thorntons and Lady Barbara Dynleys, in contact with a Mrs. Waddlestone, or a Mrs. Luttrell, or any other Hottentot of the tribe. I have not yet made my proposals; and am not at present called upon to subject myself to such a humiliation."

"Not made your proposals?—Surely, then, you are trifling unjustifiably with Leonora's affections?"—

"Leonora and I understand each other."

"Only because she does not see you, as I do, listening to the sonatas and conversation of mamma's companion; sitting in that dull dressing-room, evening after evening, with no better amusement than winding silk, or copying mazurkas for Miss Lucy Elbany!"

"Don't talk of it,—Frederica, don't talk of it. It is too sweet a delusion to last. Let me enjoy my dream before it vanishes. By the way, I find my friend Mrs. Waddlestone has actually invited you to dinner, and—"'

"That I have declined her invitation."

"You have done right!—It was a piece of presumption worthy of her, and arranged without the knowledge of her husband and daughter; who, thank heaven, very little resemble herself. She was born a Waddlestone and belonging to the firm; and being as wilful as heiresses generally are, insisted on marrying a clever young lawyer without a shilling and of tolerably good connexions, on whom her father generously bestowed his daughter, his patronymic, and five hundred thousand pounds. I often think the soapboiler-regnant's motive for marrying his daughter to a lord, is

to escape the perpetuation of the Waddlestone part of the business; for the name is entailed with the Bank-stock!"

"What a set of people!"

"Quite right not to entangle yourself with them! What would the French ambassadress and the Duchess of Whitehaven, or old Lady Wroxworth say if they met you at dinner at Waddlestone House; knowing how much the wife of a Warwickshire baronet must be compromised by such a condescension."

Before Lady Rawleigh could reply to her brother's taunt the door was thrown open, and Mrs. Erskyne made her appearance, followed by Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham, whose carriage had driven up at the same moment.

The object of the three ladies was pretty nearly the same,—to beg for Lady Rawleigh's interposition to procure invitations to Lady Olivia's breakfast; Lady Huntingfield for herself, her son and daughter, Mrs. William Erskyne for Lord Calder, Lady Rochester, Lady Blanche Thornton, and Mr. Vaux. Frederica assented with readiness. Nor was she sorry that her husband should learn that his pertinacity in driving her out of town for the furtherance of his own amusements, was likely to procure her the society of a coterie so little to his taste as that of Lord Calder. "But alas!" thought Frederica, as she lent an unheeding ear to the tittle-tattle of Mrs. Erskyne, "I need not flatter myself that Rawleigh feels the slightest interest on the subject. That time is over!"

Few things are more surprising or diverting than the meanness exhibited in London, to procure admittance to entertainments of unusual promise; the falsehoods that are told,—the degradations that are courted,—the paltry engines that are set in motion to propitiate some friend's friend of the giver of the *fête*. Lady Olivia Tadcaster was a person universally avoided, as a tiresome, restless woman, bent on turning her friends and acquaintances to account, and a personal blemish in a fashionable circle. She belonged to nobody,—was a bore to every body; and excepting when Lady A. or Lady B. had a place to find for a favourite servant, or a tradesman to recommend, she was rarely troubled by the visits of her fashionable acquaintance. Even when cards were first issued for the Ash Bank breakfast, they had been received with coldness or contempt. "What can that foolish old woman mean by giving a *fête*?" cried Lady A. "Who in the world will travel twelve miles to look at her mountebanks' tricks?" exclaimed Lady B.;—and satisfied that something better would present itself to afford them diversion on the appointed day, threw their cards of invitation into the fire.

But it happened to be one of those seasons when agricultural distress, or the distress of the manufacturing classes, or some other national disaster which could not possibly produce a reaction on the pockets of the higher ranks for two years to come, being universally quoted as a motive for dismissing one out of three French cooks, not a ball was to be heard of for love or credit. Mammas who had a numerous progeny of angels in white satin to dispose of, grew distracted; young gentlemen who had looked forward to the season to dance themselves into fashion and the dining-out line, sat desponding in their clubs, or retired to the re-perusal of their tailor's bills, in their monotonous lodgings. It was all as dull as a rainy hay-time in a pastoral county!

Under such circumstances, the Ash Bank entertainment rose to a premium; and a few days of fine weather having brought the fashionable world into a rural mood, it was admitted that Lady Olivia's shubberies would afford a pleasant change from Kensington Gardens; and that, as her ladyship was a comely person, not rendered fastidious by the frequency and routine of her entertainments, every body would go and take every body—that is, every "everybody" privileged by their standing in the world to take liberties.

Meanwhile Frederica, who had ceased to regard Lady Huntingfield and her daughter as well-meaning tiresome country neighbours, and beheld them only as the fatal witnesses of her husband's indiscretion, could not but notice the formality with which they thought it their duty to reply to Sir Brooke Rawleigh's friendly attentions. The scene of his tender adieu to Miss Elbany was so wholly unimportant to his own feelings, that he had forgotten Lady Huntingfield's intrusion and air of indignant consternation; so that he could by no means account for the ungracious primness with which she received his attempts to relieve Lady Rawleigh in the entertainment of her numerous guests. But Frederica's memory was more tenacious, her perceptions more acute; and in the midst of Louisa Erskyne's lively gossip with herself and Launceston, she cast sidelong glances at the rectangularity of person and aridity of speech of which her husband was the object.

Mrs. Erskyne, meanwhile, was exercising a similar degree of impertinence, although on very different grounds. A pretty little useless butterfly, born to flutter its wings in the sunshine, and disappear unmarked and unlamented on the approach of winter, her exclusion from Lord Calder's coterie—the best thing of its kind in London—had long been a subject of bitter mortification; and the recent reversion of her sentence a matter of equal exultation. She was too worldly-wise, however, not to detect the motive which had

proved her passport to the forbidden circle; and having little faith in Lady Rawleigh's blindness to his lordship's adoration, was apprehensive that Frederica would prove as discerning as herself. Her great object, therefore, was to prove to Lady Rawleigh her own importance and influence in the coteries at Calder House.

"Then you will write to Lady Olivia for cards for Lady Rochester, Countess Rodenfels, and Lady Blanche?" said she, while the eyes of her desponding friend were wandering towards Lady Huntingfield. "I would have asked your aunt myself, were I not tired to death with the exertions I have made to persuade them all to go. You know how Lord Calder hates a bore! I have been obliged to promise him that Lady Olivia shall not bestow more than ten minutes per hour of her tediousness upon him, during his stay at Ash Bank."

"But why trouble themselves to solicit an invitation at all?" said Launceston; who, however prone to impertinences respecting his aunt, was less patient of hearing them from the lips of others.

"Solicit?—the idea of Lady Rochester's soliciting the honour of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's acquaintance!"

"I have known her solicit—ay, and be refused, the *entrée* to houses of less respectability, and of as little importance. When a woman like Lady Rochester is to be saved from sinking, she buoys herself up with cork and other light substances."

Lady Rawleigh, vexed by her brother's bitterness, now turned the conversation by inquiring of Louisa whether Mr. Erskyne were satisfied with her miniature,—a transaction which appeared likely to kindle dissensions in a new quarter; for the fair guest immediately turned to Sir Brooke, who had been compelled by the dryness of the Huntingfields to resume his shop-colloquy with the button-holder.

"Oh! by-the-way," cried she, "I have undertaken, Sir Brooke, to procure your consent to a measure calculated for the advantage of the world in general. My picture is being engraved for a series of female portraits of the nobility, and I have ventured to promise that my friend Frederica's shall grace the following number."

Now this proposition was as new to Lady Rawleigh as to any person present. But her blush of surprise was mistaken by her husband for an avowal of confederacy; and he no longer doubted that the picture which originally moved his jealousy ere he learnt its destination as a present to Lady Launceston, had been in fact projected with a view to this offensive multiplication.

"I am sorry to disappoint you and the rest of Lady Rawleigh's friends," said he, with considerable emphasis on the word. "But I entertain the old-fashioned prejudice of not wishing to expose

my wife to the comments of the crowd round a printseller's shop. Had I married an actress, I must have submitted to such a degrading publicity. As it is—you must excuse me."

"That I will, with pleasure," cried Louisa, rising hastily to take leave; "for I shall thus escape all invidious comparisons between her face and my own. But with such opinions and principles, I wonder you ever allow her to emerge from the avenue at Rawleighford."

"Mrs. Erskyne has charming spirits," said Lady Huntingfield, when she had quitted the room; "she is a great addition to society."

And Frederica, aware of her ladyship's detestation of the caustic Louisa, readily perceived that these commendations were intended as an offence to Sir Brooke, whose demeanour towards her had been so little gracious.

But the innuendo was lost on him. He was now once more enveloped in the fogs and mists of the Report of some recent Committee. Even the departure of his guests, of Lord Launceston, of Lady Rawleigh herself, failed to divert the even tenour of Lexley's prose, or the patient gravity of his victim.

CHAPTER XXII.

They amble—they lisp—they nickname God's creatures.

HAMLET.

THE villa inhabited by the widow of Lord Derenzy at Twickenham, was precisely such a one as might have sheltered one of Congreve's heroines, or formed the shrine of a goddess hymned by D'Urfey, or lampooned by Lady Mary Wortley.—A blaze of Indian lacquer,—a labyrinth of bonzes from the New Exchange and enamel toys from the counters of Mrs. Chenevix,—specimens of *parfilage* presented as *étrences* to the Lady Sophronia Mandeville, when her right honourable father performed the functions of ambassador at the court of Lewis XV.,—*morceaux* of old Dresden,—specimens of *Sèvres* exceeding the rivalship of Harewood House;—an atmosphere redolent of Maréchal,—even the silken lap-dog on its velvet cushion,—bespoke the daintiness of the last century. Sachets, pot-pourri, and dragon china, filled every interstice of the room.

In this temple of fragile luxury,—a temple erected not by the fairies of Titania's court, but by the coxcombical elves of Count Hamilton's Tales or the *Cabinet des Fées*, who shower down *pralines* instead of roses or dimples, looking upon a lawn that

resembled the sunny courtliness of one of Watteau's pictures,—sat Lady Derenzy, on the evening of the Ash Bank fête, with Lady Lavinia Lisle, Countess Ronthorst, Miss Harcourt, a superannuated maid of honour, and Mrs. Lucretia Wriotheesley, a fragment of the ancient coterie of the Montagus and Vesseys. Each held in her hand a coffee-supper, the size of an acorn and consistency of a canary's eggshell, steaming with a hyacinthine fluid such as might have propitiated the furbelowed ghost of Pope's Belinda.

At the end of the conclave was Lady Derenzy. But oh! how different the powdered visage beneath her frizzed and powdered toupee, from the graceful dignity of feature embellishing a portrait by Gainsborough suspended at one end of the room, and graced by the inscription of "Sophronia, third Baroness Derenzy;" and still more, from the group in which, with her sisters-in-law Mrs. Martha and the late Lady Rawleigh,—at that time blooming hoydens in their teens,—she figured in an archery-piece from the animated pencil of Reynolds, in which the late Lord Derenzy was represented bow in hand and Garter on knee. In the one she appeared a nymph, in the other a queen; and well were it for many a nymph and many a queen, to be startled by a personal contrast so appalling as that now manifested between the fair and gracious Sophronia, and the stern, withered, and repellent dowager.

"Shall we have Mr. Broughley this evening?" simpered Lady Lavinia Lisle to Miss Harcourt; the only two of the party still able to deal without spectacles, and therefore regarded as two playful little creatures whose whisperings might be excused.

"Oh, no, my dear! no chance of such a thing. Broughley is quite infatuated by that creature Olivia Tadoaster. You know he was ever a butterfly; and it must be owned that with all her flightiness, she is fascinating."

"Fascinating!" cried Lady Lavinia—"gaudy as a macaw, and restless as a racock."

"You severe thing!" retorted Miss Harcourt, tapping her on the arm. "You and Olivia were always rivals."

"No!" sighed Lady Lavinia, looking down pathetically on the effigy of departed tenderness glittering on the index of her tragic volume. "Thank heaven I have been spared all the rough encounters that betide the hurricanes of human passion. Let Lady Olivia possess herself of the heart of Broughley. She will meet with no obstacle from the coquetry of Lavinia Lisle, whose widowed affections are in a better plane. But our friend has a soul; and I trust I do not offend either the living or the dead by honouring its high endowments."

"What was that you were saying about Mr. Broughley?" said Lady Derenzy, whose age and supremacy entitled her to ask impertinent questions. "What were those young people saying about our learned friend, my dear countess?"

"Lady Lavinia was observing," said Countess Ronthorst, whose gray eyes had been looking the curiosity she could not gratify,—for she was as deaf as a woodcock,—"that this is the day of the grand gala at Ash Bank; and that our little coterie will therefore be deprived of the society of Mr. Broughley and General Lorriston—"

"We can spare them,—we can spare anyone so little refined as to prefer a garish crowd to our intellectual circle," cried Mrs. Lucretia Wriothesley, propelling her words through a very long nose which acted like a speaking-trumpet.

"I am very much mistaken if Lorriston ventures his lumbago on any such fool's errand!" exclaimed Lady Derenzy. "I own I am astonished at Lady Olivia! What would her excellent mother the late Lady Trevelyan have said, to see her giving into the absurdities of these giddy-pated times!—A *fête champêtre*! Well do I recollect the ridicule excited by the introduction of a species of entertainment so ill-suited to our climate! That wild lad, my friend Burgoyne, wrote his '*Maid of the Oaks*' as a satire on the thing."

"But the angelic Farren so stole upon our hearts in Lady Bab Lardoone, that we forgot the moral of the piece!" cried Mrs. Lucretia.

"Ah! my dear Lady Derenzy!" sighed Miss Harcourt, "shall I ever forget a charming day I passed with you at Strawberry-hill in the year seventy-nine? I was then a giddy creature in a bib; and well do I recollect—ay! it must have been in eighty—for well do I recollect that Madame du Deffand's little dog, Tonton, was led forward by a pink ribbon as we were taking syllabub on the lawn, and that Horace turned aside as the little innocent creature wagged its tail on approaching us. Methought I saw a spot of moisture on his lilac lustring suit. It might have been a tear,—it might have been rain,—it *might* have been syllabub."

"Yes!" vociferated Mrs. Lucretia through her nasal tube, conveying her snuff-box as she spoke through a labyrinth of petticoats into a bottomless pit of a pocket. "Tonton was a prodigious favourite; and Horace would stand no jesting on the subject of his octogenarian amour. Mrs. Vesey, who could speak plain when she liked, once said to him—bless my soul, I forget what it was she said. But Walpole took out his pencil, (people's pencils were as

ready as their wit in those days, and now nobody carries one but an exciseman), and *scratch,—scratch*,—in his little yellow satin souvenir—”

“A stanza!” cried Miss Harcourt. “I was sure of it.”

“He was all sensibility!” said Lady Derenzy, looking as hard as if stuffed with patent iron shavings.

Mrs. Lucretia, who had been diving into the same cavernous receptacle which received the tortoiseshell snuff-box, now produced a small morocco note-case, containing bonmots, scraps, sketches, epigrams, and lampoons—the sibylline leaves of the wizard companions of her youth, all of which have since found their way into various anas and periodicals; though many of them which had been collected at Paris during her intimacy with the Geoffrins, d’Epinays, and d’Houdetots, were marked with a red cross, as being too *strong* for the English palate. “I think I can find it,” said she, affecting to turn over the leaves with an air of uncertainty, though they were worn to a diaphanous slightness by incessant reference. “Ah! here it is!—‘To Estifania.’”

Lady Lavinia and Miss Harcourt, who affected youthful vivacity, now hobbled from their seats, and hung over her with breathless attention. Countess Ronthorst put down her coffee-cup, and drew a long breath preparatory to the act of attention; and Lady Derenzy, who loathed that scarlet depositary as ardently as ever Mirabeau hated the *Livre Rouge*, or Cobbett the English pension-list, and who had been compelled to listen to this little piece of Marivaudage not less than a thousand times, was obliged to affect an interest in the business. She had only one mode of retaliation. She was in the confidence of a loose plank in the well-waxed floor, and had a method when her guests grew tedious, of jogging it with her foot till all the hands and heads of all the mandarins were set in motion; and every jar, beaker, and tazza, joined in harmonious dissonance.

“To Estifania!”—chaunted Mrs. Lavinia, in defiance.

“Sweet fair! whose lips too fiercely deal
The thunder of the skies,
Say, must our shrinking bosoms feel
The lightning of thine eyes?
Ah!—no, the tender hand of love
Is gentle as the dove,—
Venus, the child of sovereign Jove
May not his rival prove.”

“How sweet!” symphonized the quartette.

“May I come in?” said a little querulous voice, at the half-open door; and lo! a little slim outline of a man glided towards them

on the point of his toes ; a *chapeau-bras* beneath his arm, and his hair frizzed à l'oiseau royal.

"Ah, General!" cried Miss Harcourt—"I knew *you* would not desert us." And the general exclamation of delight and welcome which arose on the entrance of the antiquated Lovelace, deepened into a tumult of rapture resembling a symphony of triangles, when General Lorriston's nephew, Lord George, the fashionable lyrist, followed him into the room.

"We were apprehensive you had been seduced away to Ash Bank?" whispered Miss Harcourt, deploying her fan and looking the Ranelagh coquette.

"To Ath Bank!" lisped Lord George with a start of fastidious horror. "Am I in the habit of miething in the indithewiminate mobth of the fathionable world, that you shoud taxth me with thuch a pwedilection?"

"I understand," said Lady Margaret, "that Lord Calder, the Duchess of Whitehaven, and all the most exclusive set of London will be there."

"Far be it fwom me to impugn your Ladyship's authowity, or utter a thyllable in dithpawagement of perthons pothethed of all the pweecedenth which wank, opulenth, and fathion can bethtow. But pardon me, Lady Magawet, if without pwethuming on my own—"

"George!" exclaimed the General, instigated by an unusual flutter of spirit, which rendered him for the first time in his life so disregardful of etiquette as to interrupt a speaker having the ear of the house—"What was the name of that gentlemanly man who sat opposite me at dinner to-day; and whom Lady Wroxworth talked of bringing here this evening? Surely I am not mistaken in stating it to be Waddlestone!"

"Impossible!" cried every female present. "Lady Wroxworth has too much sense!" cried Lady Lavinia.

"Lady Wroxworth knows too well what is due to *me!*" said Lady Derenzy with majestic dignity; and rising from her seat, like Semiramis from her throne, she rang the bell, and addressed herself to the astonished butler. "Wathen! if Lady Wroxworth should present herself here to-night, accompanied by a stranger, you will have the kindness to express to her Ladyship that this evening my circle is limited to my privileged and familiar friends. You understand me!—tea and the card-tables!"

"You understand me!—Tea and the card-tables?" ejaculated the astonished domestic as he traversed the vestibule. "The house-keeper may perhaps understand setting out tea, and John or Thomas the quadrille table. But if any living mortal can understand my

Lady when she gets into her tantrums, he never stood in Jeremiah Wathen's shoes."

But the amazement depicted on the rotund visage of the butler, was mild compared with that of General Lorriston and his fair devotees. He had often compared the majestic Sophronia to Catherine of the North, and himself to the Prince de Ligne. But he now trembled before the grandeur of her ire. Not so the female portion of the circle; they prepared themselves for the unusual recreation of a scene. The general was a charming creature, refined even to spiritualization; but they knew all his little pastoral gallantries by heart. Lord George was a "man of wit and fashion about town;" but his club nickname of "Curds and whey," was only too characteristic of the sickly monotony of his discourse. A war of words between Lady Derenzy and Lady Wroxworth,—was a new feature in the annals of the Twickenham coterie? and never did Roman emperor sicken with such impatience for the sanguinary struggle of the amphitheatre, as did the spirits of the eager visitors, while they sat fidgetting with anxiety for the sound of coming wheels on the gravel. General Lorriston said not a word. The fact that he had unwittingly dined in company with a soapboiler vitiated the thin current of his blood; while Lord George, who perceived that something was amiss, looked pensively interrogative and waited the event.

At length, a fatal sound became audible in the distance; and in another minute, the door was thrown open by Wathen, and Lady Wroxworth—*alone*—in her accustomed gray satin gown and high-plaited cap,—toddled into the room. What a disappointment!

"Good evening, my dear Sophronia," said the kind-hearted old lady, unsuspicuous of the storm which had been preparing to explode.

"I thought I *knew* my friend!" observed Lady Derenzy, theatrically offering her hand; and every eye was now reproachfully turned on the poor little general.

"I was satisfied there was some misunderstanding," said Lady Lavinia.

"I never conceived it possible," cried Mrs. Lucretia.

"I guessed it would prove a false alarm!" whispered the maid of honour.

"Lady Wroxworth!" said the perplexed Lorriston, waving his hand in suppression of their murmurs, "satisfy the doubts of these ladies, and my own embarrassment, by informing them whether you did not express an intention of introducing to their society, this evening, a person with whom I had the honour of dining at Lord Wroxworth's table?"

"The individual in the velvet waistcoat," faltered Lord George.

"Mr. Waddlestone?" inquired Lady Wroxworth, in the calmest tone, and plainest English. "Yes! indeed, my dear Sophronia, I was almost in hopes of procuring you the pleasure of my friend Mr. Waddlestone's company. But he is so much in request, and had been so long engaged to the Duchess of Whitehaven, that I was obliged to give up the point. I could not prevail on him for even half an hour. From something he said, I fancy he had heard our little coterie reviled as a *bureau d'esprit*; and he had been tired to death at Lady Olivia's, with the fatigue of Princess Guéménée's eternal chatter. The ambassador brought Mr. Waddlestone back with him, that he might be in time for our dinner. But the princess assured me Lord Calder and Lady Rawleigh could scarcely be tempted to give him up. Lord Wroxworth however would never have forgiven him had he disappointed us."

"Can thutch thingth be, and overcomme uth like a thummer cloud,
Without our thpethial wonderment!"

lisped the lyrical lord. But Lady Derenzy had been preparing a speech,

"It is now some years," said she, "since the independence of America, and the influence exercised in this country by the return of a large body of enlightened men habituated to the demoralizing spectacle of an equalization of rank, was supposed to exert a pernicious influence on the minds of the secondary and inferior classes of Great Britain. At that critical moment I whispered to my husband, 'Derenzy! be true to yourself, and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order, and it will maintain its ground against the universe!' Lord Derenzy took my advice, and the country was saved!"

"Again, when the assemblage of the States General of France,—the fatal tocsin of the Revolution,—spread consternation and horror throughout the higher ranks of every European country, and the very name of the guillotine operated like a spell on the British peerage, I whispered to my husband, 'Derenzy! be true to yourself, and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order, and it will maintain its ground against the universe!' Again Lord Derenzy took my advice, and again the country was saved!"

"A terrible period is now approaching;—a day of encroachment on our privileges,—of abrogation of our rights. My husband is no more, and it may be that the Oracle of Dodona has lost its charm. But to you, my tried friends and familiar associates, I consider it my duty to repeat the warning. 'Be true to yourselves, and the

world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order, and it will maintain its ground against the universe!" "

As she terminated her harangue, Lady Derenzy emphatically jarred her coffee-cup on the table, which added a solemnity to the scene like the falling hat of Corporal Trim. "The descent of the cup was as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded in its concavity!—"

"How ineckhpethibly gwand!" said the cream-coloured poet.

"How sublime!" cried the general.

"How beautiful!" sighed the ladies.

"Poor thing!" thought Lady Wroxworth, who never dreamed of connecting this tirade with her purposed introduction of a man so polished, so enlightened, so pleasing, and so popular, as her friend the soapboiler. "She certainly is flighty at times. I am glad I did not persuade Waddlestone to come to-night. He would have been sadly bored with all these rhapsodies."

"And who had your lively favourite, Princess Guéménée, to amuse her at Ash Bank?" inquired Lady Lavinia Lisle.

"Everybody, I fancy," said Lady Wroxworth good-humouredly. "But her own party consisted of Count and Countess Rodenfels, Lady Rochester and Mr. Vaux, 'swan and shadow,' you know; my little niece Louisa, flirting with Lord Putney, and Sophronia's little niece, Lady Rawleigh, flirting with Lord Calder."

"Thank heaven!" piously ejaculated Lady Derenzy. "I rejoice that my nephew's wife is restored to some sense of propriety; I was apprehensive of hearing her name connected with that of the repugnant individual so obnoxious to my feelings."

"What a thtwong mind!" said Lord George, suppressing a yawn; while the domestics, to the infinite relief of the party, proceeded to arrange the card-tables; and the accustomed little gallantries commenced between the general and the rest of the old women concerning partners, and seats, and cutting in, and cutting out: his compliments being as smooth and flowery as the brocaded waistcoat of his great grandfather.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Like as the culver on the bared bough
 Sits mourning for the absence of her mate,
 And in her songs sends many a wishful vow
 For his return that seems to linger late ;
 So I alone, now left disconsolate
 Mourn to myself the absence of my love,
 And wandering here and there, all desolate,
 Seek with my plaints to match that mournful dove.

SPENSER.

BUT the storms of that brightest of summer days had not been confined to the antique coterie of Twickenham. Lightnings had flashed in the verdant solitudes of Ash Bank, and Tartarean thunders reverberated through the atmosphere of Essex.

Lest those who are apt to depreciate that vaccine county should be inclined to disparage the beauties of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's villa, it may be necessary to premise that Ash Bank was contiguous to one of the wildest solitudes of that ancient forest, which, however defiled by its association with the Lord Mayor's hunt,—presents some of the most exquisite specimens of woodland scenery to be found in England. Diverging from the Epping road through thickets of weeping birch and copsewood, the London guests found themselves refreshed with a softness of universal verdure, more soothing to the eye than flowery parterres or the clustering bloom of the finest shrubbery.

In gliding through the tranquil coolness of this verdant solitude, Mr. Vaux, who occupied the second seat in Lord Calder's travelling-carriage, suddenly inquired, after the weariness of a long political discussion which had extended beyond four milestones,—

“And what does your lordship intend to do with Lady Rawleigh?”

“Whatever she pleases.”

“Whatever *she* pleases!” reiterated Vaux. “That has not been usually your measure of action under similar circumstances.”

“I never was *in* similar circumstances;—never found myself captivated by the graces of a beautiful woman in love with her husband. I never saw anything more determinately matter of fact than the domestic happiness of these Rawleighs.”

“I never saw *you* so desperately in love since you left Eton;—for you are as blind as Cupid. Recollect that little story I quoted to you last night, on Lady Margaret Fieldham's authority.”

“Some idle scandal of old Huntingfield's.”

"And recollect Sir Robert Morse's history of Rawleigh's jealousy about the attendance of your mysterious friend at Lawrence's gallery."

"One of Morse's thick-headed misconceptions."

"And yet, scandal or no scandal, methinks if I had such propitious tools to work with as a jealous husband and an injured wife, I would advance more with my suit than you have done with yours."—

It might be that Lord Calder was unwilling to expose his scheme of action. For instead of replying to this taunt, he began to point out the sylvan beauty of the broomy knolls and fern-crested thickets through which they were passing. In another minute, they reached the Swiss cottage which served as lodge to the villa.

In seeking, and persuading his sister to seek, an invitation to the fête champêtre of such a person as Lady Olivia Tadcaster, Lord Calder had acted with a full anticipation of its tediousness; and regarded the sacrifice as one worthy to be offered on the shrine of his new goddess. From season to season, in the course of his fashionable existence, he had witnessed the failure of fifty similar projects; had seen the most lavish cost, the most fanciful preparations, expended to produce nothing but fatigue, exhaustion, and repentance; and he satisfied himself, from the restless and wonder-seeking tone of the lady of Ash Bank, that every previous blunder honoured by his presence would be exceeded on the present occasion. But Lady Olivia, discomfited by her recent misadventure concerning her Bohemian protégés, had for once submitted her opinion to that of her niece; and, however prone to interfere in other people's affairs, had delegated her own to the guidance of Frederica.

Now Lady Rawleigh, at all times inclined by her natural predilections in favour of simplicity, felt just then so incapable of exertion, and so preoccupied in heart and soul, that she persuaded the anxious hostess to forego the beaten track of charades and tableaux, minstrels, jugglers and Dutch fairs, and confide the cause of her breakfast to the hands of nature.

"Your visitors, my dear aunt," said Frederica, "are persons tired out by the monotony of these things, which are only endurable amid the snows and tedium of a Christmas party. They are weary of the heat and glare and dust of London; and as probably none of the multitude have condescended to look at their own parks and gardens enamelled by the richness of June, for the last twenty years, give them a tantalizing specimen of all they renounce in the charms of Ash Bank. Give them the country in all its purity."

"And do nothing for their entertainment? My dear, they will be bored to death, order their carriages, and go back to town."

"Their horses will require rest; and they will be glad to amuse themselves with your charming gardens, and those grass terraces which render the home-view from Ash Bank so beautiful. Let walks be mown and rolled through the plantations; and, depend on it you will find the spring foliage, wild flowers, and untamed aviary of this lonely spot, far more attractive than the artificial garlands and variegated lamps of a regular breakfast-giver."

"At least I will have down Ferdinand, and give them something to talk about in the originality of the breakfast, which shall be served in marquees."

"I recommend you to have down two or three first-rate cooks, and let dinner be served in the banqueting-room. People will be tired with walking about, and disposed for more substantial fare than ice and caramels."

"At least, I will have some girls from the neighbouring villages dressed in a picturesque costume, to wait at table."

"Far better rest contented with your own domestics, in their usual dress, and waiters who understand their duty."

"My dear, it shall be as you please," said her ladyship, her parsimony prompting her to escape on such easy terms; and when Lady Rawleigh arrived, she was gratified to perceive that her advice had been strictly followed.

On a first view of the little park, presenting neither streamers nor tents nor pavilions, nor temporary decorations of any description, some of the younger guests, indeed, were a little disappointed—they felt that they should see enough of briary coppices, verdant holmes, and shadowy plantations, on their return to Yorkshire, Dorsetshire, or Kent, at the close of the season. But nature is an unsilenceable monitress. Before an hour elapsed, they were inclined to acknowledge that Lord Henry was far more agreeable in a walk on the smooth turf, among the green glades of Ash Bank, than in a galoppe at Almack's; and that Lord Putney had never been so charming as when seated at their feet in a natural bower of wild honeysuckles.

But if the Lady Louisas and Lady Sophias were satisfied with this unexpected change of pleasures, the gratification experienced by such persons as Lady Rochester and Lord Calder, was far more genuine. All the stage-trick of artificial life was so familiarly known to them,—the wooden trap-doors of the pantomime were so glaringly apparent to their experienced eyes,—that the transition to the naked truth of nature was indeed refreshing. Lady Rochester forgot to examine the delicate complexion of the wild roses festoon-

ing every hedgerow; and her brother, seated by Frederica's side in a thicket of evergreens overlooking the sunny landscape and the gay groups stationed on the various terraces, felt that he had not been so satisfactorily placed throughout the brilliant festivities of the season. Yet even there, he could not find himself close at the ear of Eve without betraying the impulse of the Satanic tempter.

"I perceive," said he, in his most silvery tones of blandishment, "that you have debarred Sir Brooke from the happiness of attending you this morning."

"You forget his parliamentary duties."

"Surely I have seen more than one member here to-day?"

"Twenty, at least. But some distillery bill comes on to-day, in which Rawleigh's borough is particularly interested; and Mr. Lexley persuaded him that it was his duty to be on the spot."

"And what did Lady Rawleigh persuade him?"

"To do exactly what suited him best; a certain mode of proving the efficaciousness of her advice."

"Quite right! You are resolved to be adored beyond the limit of conjugal idolatry, and have chosen the only safe plan:—universal liberty of conscience, universal freedom of action. If Sir Brooke Rawleigh preferred his dusty ride in Hyde-park, you were very wise not to compel him to endure the dewy landscapes of Ash Bank."

"Rawleigh detests the Park," said Frederica, reddening.

"Then Vaux and I were mistaken."

"Mistaken?"

"We fancied we met him on our road hither, assisting Lord Launceston to escort a lady who was mounted on your favourite Arabian."

"Indeed?" faltered Lady Rawleigh. "Was she tall or short,—dark or fair?"

"Of a fine showy person; and as far as her veil would permit us to decide, a beautiful creature. But doubtless we mistook her companions."

"I fear not!" involuntarily ejaculated Lady Rawleigh; and Lord Calder, surprised to find her indignation so limited in its expression, cast a sidelong glance towards her, and perceived that her eyes were swimming with tears. He remained discreetly silent, to give time for the exercise and repression of the emotions he had excited; and when he fancied the bitter drops must have been driven back into her heart, recommenced his persecution.

"It seems to have been a very sudden fancy on the part of Sir Brooke Rawleigh to go into Parliament; or surely Lady Derenzy's interest might have managed it for him without driving him to the resource of so degraded a political sponsor as Mr. Lexley, or a re-

presentation which has been made a cloak to so many spendthrift libertines as Martwich?—You should have advised him better."

" My advice was not asked till the affair was settled."

" But surely on your marriage, some explanation was made of Rawleigh's public views?"

" I never heard of politics being introduced into marriage settlements. But at *that* period, Sir Brooke entertained no intention of entering into public life."

" Indeed!" said Lord Calder,—and it was an *indeed* very much resembling that of Iago.

" Why should you appear so surprised?"—inquired Frederica, whose perception was now prodigiously quickened by an allusion to the actions or motives of her husband.—" Is there anything wonderful in a sudden predilection for a political career;—any stated period for parliamentary tendencies?"

" I have a theory that says—YES!" answered his lordship, with an insinuating smile; " and my surprise arose in *this* instance, from its singular corroboration of my whims and fancies. I always imagine that I can discover in my friends, in the second year of their wedded life, a sudden mania for clubs and a decided partiality for Parliament."

" You mean that their home begins to grow distasteful to them? But we have not yet achieved that fatal period. We are still in our *first* year of probation."

" Then you must have begun your reign by a very injudicious mode of government;—you must have shown yourself too arbitrary—or—*too kind* a wife!"

Frederica started. She fancied that the consciousness which now swelled her bosom and tingled in her cheeks, arose from self-conviction. " Lord Calder is right," she thought; " I have been too kind a wife. I have disgusted him with my servility—my doting attachment. It was *my* folly that drove him into the society of Mr. Lexley,—and the snares of Miss Elbany. I have no right to be angry with him. It is all my own fault. Thank heaven it is not too late to amend my error."

Lord Calder no longer feared the *tears* of his companion. He saw that his last arrow had hit home; that she was piqued,—as much against herself as her absent husband. Nor was he inclined to quarrel with the bright flush which tinged her cheeks, or with the gaiety that imparted a sort of unnatural wildness to her conversation. She had already resolved that Rawleigh should not hear of any listlessness occasioned by his absence from the fête,—or mortification arising from his engagements during her visit to Ash Bank. For the first time, the frank and ingenuous Frederica assumed the

affections of coquetry;—smiled artificially on Lord Calder, flirted with Sir Robert Morse, jested with Lord Putney, and hailed the incense burnt upon an altar wantonly abandoned by its high priest, with all the intoxication of gratified vanity. Wonderful was the change operated in Lady Rawleigh's favour with the world in general, by this unusual vivacity. Indifferent observers are not nice in detecting the shades of distinction between nature and art; particularly where the assumed character is more pleasing to their selfish views than the original simplicity. Even Lord Calder was delighted. For though he had the good taste to prefer his victim's ordinary tone of graceful and tranquil modesty, he regarded her at present as a puppet acting under his impulse, and accrediting his infinite skill in social charlatanry.

At dinner, she found herself seated, by Lady Olivia's desire, at the head of the table of honour; with Lord Calder on one side and the young Duke of Draxfield on the other; Lady Rochester and Vaux, and the Rodenfels, being their near neighbours,—as well as Broughley, Mrs. William Erakyne and Lord Putney.

“ My dear Fred! where have you been hiding yourself all the morning ? ” cried Louisa, soon after they were seated. “ Lord Vardington—your new and devoted admirer—and myself, were in search of you in every ‘ dingle and bosky bourne, from side to side.’ He was, as usual, charming ;—but being engaged to dine in town with stupid old Lord and Lady Wroxworth, abandoned the pursuit. He went off with Princess Guéménée, just as, with the help of an opera-glass, we contrived to discover you at a distance, building, with Lord Calder, a nest in a holly-bush on the skirts of the forest.

“ Is Lord Vardington gone ! ” exclaimed Frederica, without noticing her friend's ill-natured allusions. “ I was not aware that Lady Olivia expected him.”

“ Oh ! fie—when he explicitly informed me he was indebted for his introduction to Lady Rawleigh's and Lord Launceston's kind interposition.”

“ Your ladyship must not attempt to disavow your friends,” said Lord Calder, excessively piqued by this explanation. You see they are resolved not to lose the benefit of your partiality.”

“ Lord Vardington ? ” exclaimed Lady Rochester, to whom the newly-inheriting peer had been a something more than a friend, in his early days of fashionable cadetship. “ Has he been here this morning ? —I have not seen him since his return to England.—Is he much altered—how is he looking ? ”

“ I fancy his lordship has been a resident abroad some twenty, or five-and-twenty years,” said Broughley, with the accuracy of an historian. “ As a Roman Catholic, he found ready acceptance on the continent, even during the war.”

"And as he was probably settled at Lyons or Rome before I was settled in my cradle," observed Mrs. Erskyne, "it is not to be expected that I should form an accurate estimate of the changes effected by time on his outward man."

"He is still remarkably handsome," said Lady Rawleigh, to deprecate the rising ire of Lady Rochester. "But his inward man can scarcely have been so refined and intelligent, at five-and-twenty, as at the present day."

"I never observed any extraordinary demonstration of ability on the part of my Lord Vardington," observed traveller Broughley, devouring his cutlet, *à la Française*, with the help of a knife, a napkin, and his own fingers. "I have repeatedly dined in his company in Italy."

"A circumstance which may enable you to judge of his capacity for swallowing macaroni, but which does not alter *my* opinion of his conversational powers," retorted Mrs. Erskyne. "But Lady Rochester may be enabled to judge for herself between the sapling and the oak; for Lord Vardington has promised to steal away from the Wroxworths, and return here. It is only an hour and a half's drive, with good horses; and Lady Olivia promises to amuse us till after midnight. So that he may come in for two hours of my undivided attention, and as much of Frederica's as Lord Calder can spare."

"Dispose of Lady Rawleigh's as lavishly as you please," whispered Lord Putney; "but do not defraud me of my due in your own. You belong to *me*, at least till dinner is over; and I might as well have you talking where I trust my friend Erskyne is listening,—in the House of Commons,—as amusing all these people. Remember, I allow nothing beyond a whisper till the ice is on the table."

"You are wrong," said Louisa, with a degree of flightiness worthy his own levity. "Whenever you have anything particularly particular to say, beware of lowering your voice. When you assumed your mysterious undertone just now, Mr. Vaux was stretching his ears, while he affected to busy himself with his chicken. But now that I dare his inquisition by my every-day mode of speech, he has returned to his duty of pouring oil on the stormy billows of Lady Rochester's ill-humour."

Vaux, who had been listening to every syllable uttered by the pretty little asp, gave her a look of most expressive bitterness on this explanation. But promising himself to seize some more propitious moment for her chastisement, he occupied the interval by promoting those sallies of witty animation, in which he perceived his friend Calder more than usually disposed to indulge. As soon as Broughley's learned and ponderous commentaries were buried,

under the oppression of a meal as comprehensive as his own travels, the brilliancy of the general conversation in Frederica's vicinity rose above the ordinary level; and Lady Olivia, when she occasionally directed her eye-glass towards her niece from a remote corner of the room, was charmed to perceive that the coterie so unexpectedly attracted to Ash Bank by the charms of Lady Rawleigh, appeared as much enchanted as if frequenting one of its own habitual and exclusive haunts.

Frederica, herself, neither noticed nor applauded the efforts passing around her. From the moment Lord Calder's nefarious intelligence caused the vibration of a discordant string in her bosom, all the anguish she had experienced at the moment of Mrs. Derenzy's indiscreet revelations was renewed in her heart. She seemed to listen,—she seemed to laugh;—and occasionally, some comment or inquiry burst from her lips, which from its singularity or strange inapplicability, elicited a general laugh.—Vaux and his party, so familiarized with the affectations of fine ladies, fancying she was ambitious of appearing odd and original, applauded her attempts as a triumph; while Frederica, beholding nothing in the convivial multitude that filled the banqueting-room, but a mighty mass of importunate human beings, accepted with unconscious bewilderment the champagne tendered to her—without being conscious that she had raised her glass to her lips!—

At length, the feast was at an end; and the guests, unwearied by their tranquil pleasures of the morning, were glad to lounge in the twilight coolness of the lawn and shrubberies, while fairy hands were preparing the banqueting-room for dancing. In less than an hour, it displayed a blaze of renewed illuminations. Light strains resounded under its domed roof, and light footsteps re-echoed their inspiration. Frederica, who had never danced since her marriage,—not from prudery but a disinclination for the amusement,—suffered herself to be persuaded by Sir Robert Morse who longed to tear her from Lord Calder's gouty side, that it was her business as mistress of the revels to open the ball; and much against her will, she was obliged to exhibit to the admiration of the room that graceful symmetry of form and tranquility of movement, by which Miss Rawdon had been formerly distinguished.

As soon as the dance was ended, she found Lady Olivia waiting to extricate her from the further assiduities of her partner.

"My dear Fred.!" said she, drawing her into the vestibule, "do not waste another minute on that foolish boy. It matters nothing what verdict such a person as Sir Robert Morse may pass to-morrow at White's, on the Ash Bank fête. I own, my dear, that you have exerted yourself charmingly, and I am infinitely obliged

— you. I never saw you in such good looks, or good spirits. And now, you must come and help me with the Rodenfels and the Diplomatic set. They are none of them dancing people; and Lady Rochester cannot do without her *écarté*. So I have ordered card-tables in Henry the Seventh's Chapel."

" But, my dear aunt, I cannot play,—I never touched cards in my life except in a family game of cassino with mamma and yourself. I know nothing of *écarté*."

" I do not ask you to play. But just interest yourself in the formation of the parties, by drawing your friends to the table. You see, my love, if I give such men as Calder and Vaux, Rodenfels and Villette, nothing to amuse them between dinner and supper, their memories will be clear to detect the *réchauffés* and stale jellies with which Méringue will economize his bill of fare."

" I will do my utmost to blunt their observation," said Lady Rawleigh, smiling at the restless tactics of her aunt; and she found no difficulty in persuading the ladies Rochester, Blanche Thornton, and Barbara Dynley, followed by their little army of admirers, to proceed towards the apartment so incongruously selected for the attractions of the *écarté*-table.

Still, the party wanted spirit, the players were not habituated to each other or to the locale; there was no eager lady of the house to appoint, decide, divide, distribute;—prevent the ladies from cheating and the gentlemen from quarrelling. Lady Olivia was off to a consultation with Monsieur Méringue; and Lady Rawleigh, reclining languidly on a remote ottoman, listened, or seemed to listen to the gentle flow of Lord Calder's eloquence.

" My dear Lady Rawleigh," cried Lady Barbara, approaching her, probably with a view to the interruption of an intimacy obnoxious to her former influence at Calder House, " pray come nearer the table, and animate our proceedings a little. Let me put down a guinea in your name, on our side, and turn the luck."

" Certainly,—if you will play the banker to my unprovided treasury, and not ask me to play."

And in five minutes Frederica was informed that she had won, and asked whether she would again deposit the same sum.

" Put them *both* down," she replied to Mr. Vaux, who had brought the two guineas to the sofa, from which Lord Calder now rising, whispered a few words to his friend; but only to return with fresh eagerness to his seat, where he contrived to engross the entire interest of his companion from the murmur and occasional exclamations of the *écarté* table, by allusions,—now indirect, now agonizingly personal,—to the proceedings of Sir Brooke.

Occasionally, this interesting topic was interrupted by Mr. Vaux's

diplomatic messages of "Lady Rawleigh, you have won,—Lady Rawleigh, you have lost,—Lady Rawleigh, will you double your stake?"—all which fluctuations, had Frederica taken the trouble to give her attention to the subject, she would have supposed to be limited within the moderate boundary of a ten pound note; and it was a stroke of horror and amazement to her, when she found her attention suddenly claimed by Lord Vardington, who had been standing for some time unobserved beside the card-table, and who, instead of accosting her with his ordinary deference, observed abruptly, "Good evening, Lady Rawleigh. Are you not rash in confiding the management of your finances to the general mercy? Are you aware that you have already lost a hundred and eighty guineas?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

RESOURCEN. But how can you lug them into a state of bankruptcy? They are no dealers, you know.

PILLAGE. No dealers? Yes, but they are.

RESOURCE. Of what kind?

PILLAGE. Why, they are dealers of cards.—FOOTER.

FREDERICA was scarcely less startled by this unexpected intelligence, and the mode in which it was communicated, than she had been by the fatal announcement of Mrs. Martha Derenzy, touching the unsuspected frailties of her husband. Yet such was her inexperience in the details and hazards of the gaming-table, that the amount of her loss did not appear so frightful as to a greater adept in the vicissitudes of écarté. It seemed as if a sum so quickly and easily lost, might be as quickly and easily regained; and, firmly believing that the aspect of affairs must mend in the course of a few more deals, she replied with as much self-possession as she could assume, "I was indeed little aware of the extent of my stake—I must watch more narrowly over my speculations." And rising from her seat, she advanced towards the card-table; followed by Lord Calder, who, in spite of his secret inclination to massacre her officious mentor, judged it prudent to affect unconcern in the business by entering into a desultory conversation with Vardington.

Now Lady Rawleigh's experience of cards and card-players was comprised in the sober drowsy game of long whist, peculiar to her mother's circle of dowagers; and the arcadian academy of tredillers and quadrillers, into which she had been inaugurated on occasion

of one or two formal visits to Sophronia of Twickenham. She had never seen the vexation of a loser extend beyond a peevish sigh, or asthmatic grunt; or the triumph of a winner expand beyond the buckram simper of General Lorriston on dropping two half crowns into his spangled card-purse, or the tripsomeness of Lady Lavinia Lisle's parting curtsey, after adding a sovereign to her collection of coin of the realm. What, therefore, was her amazement on reaching the cluster round the *écarté* table, where a vista was immediately opened for her by the male idlers forming the background of the group, to perceive the lovely Lady Barbara Dynley seated in all the suspense of "I propose," and her antagonist, Count Rodenfels, throwing a glance of scrutiny at once over his own indifferent hand, and her agonized countenance; while Lady Rochester, her artificial bloom heightened by a fever of agitation, such as would have driven her to distraction could a mirror have been placed before her, sat watching the result. Every female visage interested in the event, however young, however beautiful, was sharpened into ungracious asperity; while on the ancient visages of certain dowagers and sexagenarian spinsters, cupidity and ferocity were engraven as by the talons of a demon.

The men who owned a stake in the golden piles and bank-notes heaped upon the table, more accustomed to subdue the evidence of evil passions and more alive to the odium of evincing eagerness in the pursuit, affected to whisper to each other with a tone of the most cheerful gaiety; while parched lips, bloodshot eyes, and a distempered spot upon either cheek, betrayed their inward perturbation. Not one among the party whose demeanour was natural, or whose voice was pitched in its ordinary key; and no sooner was the game over, and the spoils in process of division and subdivision, than Frederica found herself absolutely blushing at the shabby vehemence of her own sex, and the angry glances darted from the eyes of the losing cavaliers. As she noticed the smile of exultation with which Lady Barbara swept her allotted handful of sovereigns into her reticule, all the grace of action and the charm of countenance she had formerly admired in Mr. Dynley's wife, subsided from her imagination; and while the arrangements for the ensuing game were formed, with the same contentious and ill-bred selfishness, Lady Rawleigh found a moment to express to Lady Barbara her regret at being so largely indebted to her assistance.

" You owe me nothing!" cried the exhilarated winner. " As you and Lord Calder chose to be ex parte abettors of our *écarté*-table, we have made you play in opposition; so that you can settle your account with him at the end of the evening. Mr. Vaux has been booking for you both; and as you have won on the last two

games, I recommend you not to desert your luck. Play on, and you will bring yourself round in an hour."

Through ignorance or indifference, Lady Rawleigh accepted these counsels; and being soon wearied by the heated atmosphere round the table, and disgusted by the tone of avidity displayed by her female friends, she again retired beyond the limits of the circle and seating herself in an open window, became once more engrossed in conversation with Calder and Lord Vardington.

"I am happy to perceive," said the latter, in a low voice, as she threw herself into a vacant chair, "that though Lady Rawleigh pledges her *purse* to the écarté-table, she cannot fix her interest upon its chances."

"I am playing merely to oblige Lady Olivia," she replied, surprised by his unwonted gravity; "for the first, and probably the last time."

"You venture on a high stake for a beginner," said her new acquaintance in the same admonitory voice, which caused certain half-uttered imprecations to interpose between the clenched teeth of Lord Calder.

"I suffer it to be fixed by others," replied Frederica drily; "and it is lucky for me that they have not speculated more deeply on my behalf."

Apprehensive that the pertinacity of this intrusive counsellor might discourage Frederica from venturing further into his toils, Lord Calder now judged it necessary to divert the channel of their conversation, and such was his dexterity, that he succeeded without much difficulty in arresting the attention of both, by engaging them in one of those gay and graceful discussions in which the nothingnesses of society are enveloped by an original thinker and fearless talker. He advanced paradoxes, to give them an opportunity of being refuted by the rational Vardington. He professed subtleties of sentiment, to delude Frederica into the absorbing task of investigation. By the time they had refined upon a few of these artificial theories, and confuted a few of his lordship's casuistries, the crowd at the card-table broke into a degree of vociferation announcing that its mysteries and anxieties were at an end. Mr. Vaux, approaching the window with his usual air of listlessness, observed to Lady Rawleigh that he feared the frowns of Fortune on the present occasion would afford her little temptation to become an écarté player. "You have been in your usual luck, my dear Calder," he continued; "for Lady Rawleigh writes herself your debtor to the amount of two hundred and seventy pounds."

Notwithstanding the distemperature of heart and mind which had imparted to the whole evening a sort of visionary unreality, Frederica was startled into sobriety by this terrible sentence. She

felt herself growing dizzy with the shock; and after a slight apology to Lord Calder for remitting the payment of her debt till her return to town, hurried away to seek confirmation of the intelligence from Lady Barbara, and escape the scrutiny of Lord Vardington.

Scarcely had she attained the Gothic door of the misapplied sanctuary, when Lady Olivia seized her precipitately by the arm, and dragged her away to preside at a supper-table where the Rodenfels and a large party of the elect of fashion were already assembled; and where Lady Rochester's wit, exalted into its boldest key, was eliciting the buoyant gaiety of her accustomed set. Among such persons, it may be readily supposed that the discomfiture of Lady Rawleigh was as much unnoticed as her real attractions were unfelt. Yet scarcely had she been conducted to her seat by Sir Robert Morse, when she found herself assailed on every side by an excess of compliments and graciousness redoubling all former tokens of politeness. And little was she aware of the source of her increased popularity! Having discovered her to be capable of losing rouléau after rouléau without so much as inquiring the name of the dealer or the nature of the opposition, Lady Rochester began to regard her with unequivocal respect. Countess Rodenfels gave her a general invitation to her diplomatic soirées—Lord Wallingford begged permission to leave his name in Bruton-street,—Lady Blanche exultingly reminded her that Sir Capel Thornton's seat was not more than thirty miles distant from Rawleighford, quite within visiting distance. And the old Duchess of Ledbury inquired, with an unusual show of courtesy, after poor dear Lady Launceston's pulmonary afflictions?

Yet not even these flattering testimonials could withdraw the remembrance of Frederica from her mischances. Having remained totally indifferent to their progress and untouched by the hazards of the écarté-table, she could not of course feel convicted of the humiliating vice of play, in its most flagrant sense. But when, on glancing wildly round the supper-room, she perceived Lord Calder standing amid a group of fashionable roués, and recollecting that she owed him a sum which she should find it difficult indeed to collect at a moment's warning, her heart sank beneath his gaze of familiar admiration. Incomprehensible murmurs seemed deepening around her; her heart was sickened almost beyond the power of controlling her vexation of spirit, and it was fortunate indeed for poor Frederica, that the Ash Bank guests did not forget its twelve miles distance from London, and began to take their departure. She saw the last loiterer depart. She heard the boyish tumult of Lord Putney and the Duke of Draxfield, sportively dis-

puting the possession of the only cloak left in the vestibule; and, without noticing the thanks now poured upon her by Lady Olivia for her exertions, or listening to the recapitulation of Monsieur Méringué's blunders and deficiencies, she hastened to her own room, shuffled off the attendance of Mrs. Pasley, and found refuge for her tears upon her solitary pillow!

Erring, however, as she was, Lady Rawleigh demands justice at our hands. We feel bound to declare that, though her arithmetic was taxed in a perplexing mental calculation, and though Mr. Ruggs and his cheque-book were among her most horrific visions, the figures of Miss Elbany—Mameluke—and the member for Martwich—formed the latest images imprinted on her mind, as the morning sunshine glowed upon her first sleep.

Much has been said, and much indited, concerning the retributions inflicted by Providence on the waking of the drunkard, his headaches and dizzy distemperature. But there is no act of immoral excess which is not followed by painful sensations.

The dark and shuddering chill,
Which follows fast on deeds of ill,

is by no means confined to the bosoms of the intemperate. Sir Brooke after his fathomless bowl of Martwich punch, was not ex-cruciated by so oppressive a headache as poor Frederica, as she wandered among the rustic trellises of Ash Bank the following morning.

While Lady Olivia was busy with her head gardener in all the reversionary distresses of inspecting her trampled parterres, rifled exotics, and plundered conservatories, and in receiving from her butler the cellar-book with its dozens of dozens of dozens extracted for the use of Monsieur Méringué and his myrmidons, Lady Rawleigh stole away unnoticed into those lonely shrubberies, so recently invaded by folly, flirtation, and frippery, and now restored to their ordinary grassy tranquillity. The birds were singing around her. The wild flowers still sparkled with dew. And in an accession of rural sensibility, she inveighed against her weakness in having quitted the solitudes of Rawleighford with all their pure and glorious charms and unalloyed happiness of domestic life, to plunge into the toil, tumult, and fretful irritations of the great world.

"I cared not for them—they cared not for *me*!" she exclaimed, as her restless footsteps wandered onwards. "I might have led a useful and happy life in Warwickshire. And now, it is too late! Were I to return home even this day, I should bear with me the shame of having been beguiled into unpardonable and sinful prodigality; and the sorrow of knowing that *his* heart has been

profaned by devotion to another. It will not last—I know it will not and cannot last. Unlawful attachments are ever of short duration. But all the charm, all the confidence of our union is at an end; and another and another will succeed to this first dereliction, till I shall at length become indifferent to *his* indifference, and learn to despise or to detest my husband."

And as she announced to herself this prospect of mutual indifference, poor Frederica threw herself down on a seat that very opportunely presented itself, and burst into an agony of tears. But floods of tears, whether originating in jealousy or remorse, cannot last for ever even when flowing from the eyes of the most heroical heroine; and when the concluding drops glistened on her silken lashes, she found her looks resting upon the self-same velvet pastures and shelving coppices which they had contemplated in company with Lord Calder on the preceding day; a circumstance which naturally brought to her recollection the ill-concealed idolatry of which she had been the object. Had she been happy, at peace with herself, her husband, and the world, Frederica's heart was too deeply imbued with right feelings and virtuous principle, not to have detected and recoiled with disgust from the truth. But a thousand morbid emotions affected her bosom.—She was miserable,—she was desperate,—she was injured;—and it is surprising with what blind predilection we turn in our sense of oppression and abandonment, to those who speak us fairest and enter most vehemently into our wrongs. To become fully conscious of the charm that lies in the soothing tones of sympathy, it needs to have lost two hundred and seventy sovereigns at écarté; and to have been supplanted in the heart we believed exclusively our own, by the person we most despise in the creation!

Frederica, while she pondered over the daring defiance of her wishes with which Sir Brooke had absented himself from Lady Olivia's fête, could not but remember that Lord Calder had eagerly plunged into a society and a species of diversion odious to his fastidious taste, to approach her side; that notwithstanding the attacks made on his notice by Lady Blanche and Mrs. Erskyne, he had never for a moment withdrawn himself from the task of animating the uneventful monotony of her morning. She recollects his almost paternal vigilance over her, when she was molested by the bold homage of Lord Putney and Sir Robert Morse. She recollects the gentle persuasiveness of voice and manner which had tempered his admonitions, during their tête-à-tête on that very seat; and ended by forgiving him for having become her creditor, when she remembered that the act was involuntary on his part, and arranged without his concurrence.

One point however was urgent; that she must hasten her departure for town, to make arrangements for the payment of her debt; and she resolved, in defiance of her aching head and heart, her empty purse and overcharged feelings, to escape at once the society of Sir Brooke and a visit to Charles-street, by taking refuge at Almack's. She had heard Lady Margaret Fieldham canvassing for a chaperon the night before; and determined to offer her services, so as to anticipate all remonstrances on the part of her husband.

Relieved by these projects, Lady Rawleigh returned to the house with a countenance little more disturbed than that with which her fussy aunt emerged from her audience to the French cook and English pantler. Lady Olivia had engaged to accompany her back to London in what is termed the "cool of the evening." But as one ladyship was eager to escape the spectacle of the wreck of property consequent on the fête, and the other to fly to the spectacle of the wreck of property and happiness by which she was menaced, they became unanimous in opinion that the "cool of the evening" is best represented by a sultry, dusty, breathless afternoon in June, enjoyed on the high road among butter-carts and Epping stages.

We are indebted to Dr. Johnson for a confirmation of our opinion that one of the pleasantest of sensual pleasures is to be whirled along a level road in an easy vehicle. "Postchaise" is the specification of the philosopher of Bolt-court. But colloquial abuse having now restricted that once honourable appellation to the rattling and jarring vehicles distributed gratis by post-masters to unprovided travellers, we are unwilling to appropriate Frederica's equipage by the term. Designated by whatever name, it had not progressed many miles over the plane surface of the county of Essex, before the ill-humour and depression of its inmates became considerably amended. Lady Olivia was already revolving in her mind the glorious verdict her breakfast was about to receive from society and the newspapers, as some balance to its concomitant disasters.

"I cannot recollect anything like a failure in the arrangements of the day," mused her ladyship. "The fine and superfine people appeared quite satisfied, and stayed till the last; and the beauties had put on their best looks to do me honour."

"It all went off very well;—it was a charming breakfast!" said Frederica, with a desponding sigh.

"Binnwell assures me that the Burgundy was sour, that out of the four dozen opened two were thrown away; and Meringue complained very much of the champagne, and said it poisoned his plate.

But somehow or other people got through both. Lord Calder said something very civil about the excellence of the pines. He never tastes them, you know, but is an unequalled judge of the bouquet, and can distinguish whether a New Providence or a Catalonian is cut in the adjoining room."

"I heard Lord Vardington making a very scientific and laudatory speech on the subject."

"Lord *who*, my dear?"

"Lord Vardington,—the new man."

"I wonder which of my acquaintance took the liberty of bringing him? He certainly never was presented to me, and received no regular card."

"Oh! people do those things now with very little compunction."

"Not wellbred people; particularly when there is a sitting down dinner or supper."

"The Duke of Draxfield brought his brother; and Lady Caroline Covey favoured us with two daughters and a niece more than were specified on her card of invitation."

"Dukes with a hundred thousand a-year are privileged to be impertinent; and Lady Caroline is my second cousin. I dare say, by-the-bye, it was your new ally, Lady Rochester. I recollect there was some sort of scandal about them some five-and-twenty years ago."

"Then it must have occurred when Lord Vardington was at Eton; for he cannot be more than forty now. But are you sure, my dear aunt, that any friendship ever existed between them?—I saw them together at Lawrence's gallery; and they did not seem to have any previous acquaintance."

"Confirmation strong!—A discarded lover is usually a stranger or an enemy. But, my dear Frederica, notwithstanding the praises you have bestowed on my fête and the exertions by which you contributed to its excellence, *you* at least have no reason to remember it with satisfaction."

"Nay," replied Lady Rawleigh, blushing in the belief that the jealous motive of her depression was known to her aunt, "it would have happened on some other occasion, if not on this. Indeed, on the whole, I am thankful that my eyes have been opened."

"Pardon me, my dear, I have a better opinion of your discretion! —I am satisfied the misfortune originated solely in your desire to oblige me."

Frederica now perceived that Lady Olivia alluded to the écarté-table.

"And as I should be very sorry," continued her ladyship, with a grim smile, "that you had reason to connect any unpleasant

reminiscences with Ash Bank, you must do me the favour to accept this fifty pound note. You can devote the surplus to the setting of the Roman mosaics."

The surplus!—Poor Lady Olivia!—In the simplicity of her heart, she conceived it just possible that her niece might have been decoyed into playing five shilling points, and into a loss of some fifteen or twenty pounds; and fancied that she was performing an act of signal munificence. It was in vain that Lady Rawleigh blushingly declined the gift. The old lady's heart and purse were both open; and she rejoiced in being able to remove the uneasiness which she plainly perceived to be depressing her niece.

"And who informed you of my ill luck, dear aunt?" inquired Frederica. "I did not notice you in the card-room."

"No, my dear!—I was too busy with Mérinque's people to come and see how you were going on; and with all my watchfulness I could not manage to prevent them breaking off the head of Britannia in the biscuit group of my plateau, besides the arms of two shepherdesses."

"I conclude then, that Lady Barbara complained of sharing my misfortunes?"

"No! it was Mr. Waddlestone, who laughingly advised me to hasten the announcement of supper; unless I wished Lady Rawleigh to be pillaged of her last guinea by Rodenfels and Co."

"Mr. Waddlestone?—How very officious! I was not aware that any of those odious people were present. I thought I heard something of Miss W. being confined with a cold."

"Her father did not seem the least uneasy; but I thought myself fortunate to get rid of the family at so cheap a rate. *He* came with the Prince de Guéménée."

"Did he?" said Frederica. "I did not even perceive the Guéménées.—In such a crowd one misses half one's friends."

"They went away early, to dine in town," said Lady Olivia, and added something further on the subject which was lost to Lady Rawleigh; whose thoughts were divided between Lord Launceston's folly and her husband's treachery.—She had not even a name to qualify the guilt of Miss Elbany!

CHAPTER XXV.

Let the strict tale of graver mortals be
 A long, exact, and serious comedy;
 In every scene some moral let it teach,
 And, if it can, at once both please and preach.
 Let *mine* an innocent gay farce appear.

POPE'S EPISTLES.

LADY RAWLEIGH had been careful to time her arrival in town so that the post hour would enable her to draw upon Mr. Ruggs, to the full amount of the two hundred and twenty pounds still remaining in his hands as the residue of her three-quarters' pin money; a sum which, with the note so kindly and opportunely presented to her by Lady Olivia, would discharge her debt of honour to Lord Calder. On examining her treasury, she found some forty or fifty pounds untouched of Lady Launceston's original benefaction; which she conceived would supply her incidental expenses till the 9th of August, the anniversary of her wedding-day, renewed her claims upon the Rawleighford agent, for the concluding hundred of the year.

But then the statuary,—the opera-box,—the milliner's account,—the Roman mosaics,—the Epsom expedition!—Alas, poor Frederica! —A sensation of loathing and terror pervaded her bosom as she pondered upon these things; and it afforded at least a respite to her fears when she remembered having heard Christmas assigned as the season of universal payment. With a singular abuse of arithmetic, her inexperience prompted a computation that the pin money of another half-year would set her free from pecuniary embarrassment.

Her spirits were however sufficiently fluttered by this opening of the budget, to lead her to rejoice at the information imparted by Martin, that Sir Brooke did not dine at home. Having little anticipated Frederica's return on the day succeeding her festal fatigues, and being perfectly contented that she should remain at Ash Bank, out of the way of Lady Rochester and her set and under the duennaship of a gryphon of such unapproachable vigilance as Lady Olivia, he was indulging in the Wednesday-delights of a senatorial half-holiday, at the sober mansion of a Derenzy cousin, gloomily domesticated in Argyll-street. This collateral branch of his kindred having inferred that his alliance with the fashionable Miss Rawdon must necessarily render him a very fine gentleman, and his seat in Parliament a very wise one, he found himself regarded with as much deference by the tribe of common-place mediocrities by which he was now surrounded, as awaited the stately presence of Lord Calder in the coterie of Calder House!

Meanwhile Frederica, after a few three-cornered billets of explanation with Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham *on her* project of chaperonship, which was joyously accepted on the part of the latter, and after a most elaborate plan de campagne, by which it was arranged that Lady Rawleigh's carriage should convey her protégée from Lady Salisbury's party to Bruton-street, about eleven of the clock, she lay down for an hour's repose previous to the business of the toilet. But after being roused from her restless dreams long before she felt sufficiently refreshed for the labours of the evening, and just as, in full array, in all her brilliancy of garlands and diamonds, she stood watching in the drawing-room to receive her bouquet, fan, and gloves, at the moment of departure, a heavy unscientific knock invaded the street door, and the step of Sir Brooke Rawleigh was heard upon the stairs!

Frederica had time to assume a degree of dignified majesty becoming the occasion and calculated to strike dismay into the soul of the delinquent; and so handsome did she look in this attitude of regal disdain, that nothing could be more natural than the start and pause of delighted surprise which for a moment detained the astonished baronet on the threshold.

"My dear Frederica!" he exclaimed, advancing with affectionate warmth towards her, "I had not the slightest expectation of your return. What brought you to town in so great a hurry? And where are you going in all that splendour?"

"You forget that it is Wednesday," replied Lady Rawleigh, coldly, withdrawing the hand she had been compelled to extend towards him in order to escape a more tender greeting:—"a circumstance that will as naturally account for my haste to leave Ash Bank.—I am going to Almack's."

"Almack's!" cried the provoked husband, little accustomed to be greeted in this harsh and contemptuous manner; and whose feelings were irritated by having imbibed a superabundance of fiery wine, in a feverish dining-room stuffed beyond its dimensions by a set of ill-bred men, stuffed beyond their capacity with politics:—"can you not remain at home for one evening?"—while he threw himself sulkily on the sofa, Frederica coolly replied that she found no inducement to pass the evening in Bruton-street in a solitary and deserted house.

"Could I have anticipated your haste to return to town," replied the baronet, growing still more angry, "I should not have accepted Mr. Derenzy's invitation. But since the house is no longer either solitary or deserted, perhaps you will oblige me by giving up this one ball in my favour;—unless indeed you have any very particular engagement to demand your presence there."

"I have a very particular engagement," said Lady Rawleigh, adjusting her bouquet with the most provoking sang froid. And Sir Brooke, who had seen her on more than one occasion go through the trying ordeal of giving up a party when fully equipped, in order to gratify his whim for staying at home, was as satisfied that the present case argued mischief as her utmost vengeance could desire. Between the irritations of sour claret and jealousy of Lord Calder, he was trembling on the verge of domestic tyranny; and had just nerved himself to declare that he insisted on the resignation of the ball, when a thundering knock and a carriage stopping at the door, arrested the sentence on his lips.

"Good night!" said Lady Rawleigh, instantly seizing her fan and gloves. "This is Lady Margaret Fieldham, whom I have promised to chaperon;" and without giving him time to extricate himself from his sullen recumbency on the sofa, to see her properly shawled and escorted, she bounded down stairs, and in a moment he heard the departing wheels of the chariot.

"And such are the blessings of matrimony!" soliloquized the injured husband, as he gazed round the lonely chamber, which, for two days past, had assumed a melancholy disarray in consequence of the absence of its lovely mistress; and which now derived a sort of mysterious gloom, from the single dressing-room taper, brought down by Frederica, and left burning on a distant table. "These are the joys of a London life!" Then rising from the sofa, he began to pace the room with a degree of perturbation almost rivalling that of the morning. But on this occasion, it was too late to fly to Charles-street for counsel or solace; and he had begun to mutter a few unhandsome expressions touching Lady Launceston's dowager hours, and valetudinarian habits, when it suddenly occurred to him to order a hackney-coach and proceed to the scene of delinquency. He was so long in finding his ticket among the confused mass of visiting cards collected during Frederica's absence, that the plebeian vehicle to which he had condemned himself, arrived at the door before he had time to ascertain, by a glance at the looking-glass, that a disordered toilet, and a heated, and family-dinnerish visage, are by no means graceful preparatives for a ball-room so well lighted as that of Willis. He took his departure with a flaccid cravat, dishevelled head, and resentful heart, such as nothing but a cross husband ever dreams of introducing into polite society.

Frederica, in the interim, delighted to have got over her first interview with a display of such dignified calmness, and without alluding to Charles-street or Miss Elbany, gradually recovered her spirits; and by the time she had traversed the ball-room with La² Margaret on her arm, she contrived to forget Bruton-street ar

tribulations. For her present views and purposes, she could not have been provided with a more satisfactory protégée than the one that had fallen to her share. There were no impatient lordlings eager to tear her companion from her side; no bevy of adorers to surround them with importunate homage. Lady Margaret Fieldham had reached that critical point of dowager girlhood, which made it advisable to her parents to omit the date of her birth from their page in the peerage; and rendered current her partnership account, little better than a certificate of bankruptcy. In the course of the season, she thought herself fortunate in being occasionally asked to dance by some detrimental or disreputable who found it convenient to bag her father's pheasants in October, and unbag his foxes in December; or by some small dandy about town, some poor honourable, or secretary's secretary, who managed to eke out his three hundred and sixty-five eleemosynary dinners, by frequent invitations to the well-spread board of Lord Huntingfield.

It was not a little amusing to Frederica to observe how laboriously the elderly young lady strove to impress upon her mind her abhorrence of dancing in general, and of fatigue on this oppressive night in particular; and how completely she over-acted her usual grimaces of tremulous delicacy. "It killed her to walk about,—it suffocated her to sit still. In one room, there was a most oppressive crowd; in the other, a paralyzing draught of air." All which murmurs, being interpreted, simply meant that poor Lady Margaret was dying for a partner!"

There was one branch of the business, however, which gratified even more than it diverted her. Lord Calder, who entertained a horror of affected women, and who had found himself at one period of his career a mark for Lady Margaret's matrimonial manœuvres, no sooner noticed the companion with whom Lady Rawleigh had fortified herself, than he went his way to the opposite side of the room; and devoted himself to a tête-à-tête with Lady Blanche till some raw guardsman should seek the hand of Lord Huntingfield's daughter. At length, unable longer to refuse himself a share in the gentle smiles he saw dispensed by Lady Rawleigh in return for the attentions lavished on her by the leading men of the beau-monde, he contrived to reach one of his nephews; —a stripling devoted to the public service of sketching monkeys on the blotting-paper of a Treasury minute-book;—and devoted to the will of his rich and influential uncle.

"My dear Alfred," whispered Lord Calder with an air of mystery, "I am surprised to see you idling about, while Lady Margaret Fieldham has no partaer. Surely I must have pointed out to you 'e eligibility of being on good terms with that family?—Her elder

brother, Lord Manningtree, has been much talked of lately for the Exchequer, and is one of the most prominent men of the present party."

"I really did not observe,—I positively was not aware,—I trust you will excuse my inattention;" faltered the captured Mr. Rockingham, who had been loitering in the vicinity of Mrs. William Erskyne, with a hope of being permitted to relieve Lord Putney's guard, and escort that capricious little personage into the tea-room. And while his crafty uncle leisurely followed his line of march, poor Alfred made his doleful way through groups of the youngest and loveliest women in England, to offer his homage to a superannuated damsel who had dawned upon a county ball or two, before his own Honourable birth was announced in the *Morning Post*.

Just as he found himself within reach of Lady Margaret, his brother official, Lord George Madrigal, seized him by the arm.

"My dear fellow, I have been looking for you in evey quarter of the woom!" said he. "I followed Lady Blanthe'th boa twithe wound the waltzerth, fanthying you mutht be cawying it; and I am jutht come fwom theartching Mrs. Erthkyne'th pocket. Where are you going in thuth a huwy?"—

"To a better place I trust. But what have you to say to me?"

"I want you to be of a water-pawty to Wichmond, the day after to-morrow. An eethellent thet—the Dynleyth, Erthkynth, Dwachfield, Wythe, Launthton, and half a dothen otherth; the guardth band,—Gunter,—and a wuwal spot in the Park thelected by myself. Think what an aggweagation of attractionth!"

"And at what rate of ruin? My quarter's salary?"

"A twifle—a twifle—two or three soveweighth at the eth-twemity."

"I will think of it, and let you know in the morning," said the perplexed Alfred; suspecting that his uncle might be within hearing, and disposed to lecture him on an indulgence so much at war with his official duties. But Lord Calder's ears were far otherwise engrossed. From his station behind these two importunate boys, he could discern the mild radiance of Frederica's eyes as they rested on the countenance of some invisible personage, and the silvery tones of her voice breathing words of the kindest gentleness to the same concealed rival. Had it not pleased Lord George to glide off at that critical moment, his patiente would have been exhausted. But he had now the satisfaction of seeing his nephew's curls incline towards Lady Margaret Fieldham; and of observing an acceleration of airs and attitudes on her part, such as spoke compliance with the request.

Poor Alfred!—Lady Margaret had already quitted Frederica's arm, and fastened herself to his own with the tenacity of a limpet;

leaving to Lord Calder ample room to discover that the individual favoured by Lady Rawleigh's smiles and Lady Rawleigh's gracious discourse, was nothing more alarming to his self-love than the fair girl whom he had seen at the drawing-room attached to the Cantelupe melon.

"Will you allow me to offer you my arm," said he, advancing towards Frederica, "while Lady Margaret leaves you!"

"Thank you," said Frederica, with a faint smile. "But I promised the Duke of Draxfield to dance with him, should Lady Margaret change her mind. Miss Waddlestone is engaged to waltz with the Comte de Molleville, and will inform the Duke that I am ready to fulfil my engagement."

Lord Calder's heart swelled rebelliously at the idea of Lady Rawleigh condescending to remind a young puppy, such as Draxfield, of his engagements; and still more, at the recollection of the bootless pains he had taken to secure the happiness of another; particularly when the count, on whose arm Leonora was leaning, hastened towards his grace, who was at Frederica's side in a moment, hatless, caneless, breathless, and smiling his self-congratulation at this unexpected summons.

"At least," said Lord Calder, anxious, in spite of his pique, to retain some pledge for her return on the conclusion of the dance, "at least permit me the honour of holding your scarf and fan, while you are more agreeably engaged." In another minute, he had the satisfaction of seeing Lady Rawleigh's graceful figure whirling round the room as if in mockery of his defeated machinations.

It is admitted by all men endowed with that nervous susceptibility of body and soul which the ill-natured opprobriate by the name of jealousy, that nothing can be more trying to a husband afflicted with this distemperature, than to see the idol of his bosom dance, for the first time after her marriage, with another man. It usually occurs that the lady's latest exhibition of a similar kind, was made in conjunction with the fortunate suitor who has now the supreme glory of calling her his own; and being connected in his mind with the courtship which forms the concluding stanza of the poetry of human life, the act appears an encroachment on his privileges. But what must be such a trial of sensibility when the dance is a waltz,—the loving lord an Othello such as Sir Brooke Rawleigh,—and the lucky partner a young gentleman of such attractions as the Duke of Draxfield?—

Yet such was the malice of the Fates, that precisely this combination of untoward events awaited the honourable member for Greenwich, having diligently searched every corner of the

ball-room as the probable refuge of her ladyship and Lord Calder, he suddenly caught a glimpse of her lovely form, flying through the maze of waltzers on Draxfield's arm, in the centre of a ring of admiring spectators !

When Collinet swelled his concluding *minim*, and Musard's chin rested on his violin and his keynote, Frederica, stopped short in the vortex by the firm support of her partner, had the satisfaction of finding herself next to her husband, his countenance lowering with all the tornadoes of conjugal indignation.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Am I the lord of such a lady?—TAMING OF THE SHREW.

THE start with which Frederica recognised this unexpected proximity was interpreted by Sir Brooke into the impulse of a guilty conscience ; and, anticipating some show of penitence or humility in her demeanour towards an injured husband, he was not a little surprised to find his wife negligently decline the arm he tendered to her support, and coolly announce that “she must return to Lord Calder, who was taking care of her scarf !”

What opinion poor Rawleigh might form at that moment concerning the turpitutes of fashionable life, it would be perplexing to determine ;—but the countenance with which, at some little distance, he followed the Duke of Draxfield and his partner towards the other end of the room, was sufficiently rueful to attract the notice of Mr. Dynley.

“ Ha ! Rawleigh, my dear fellow ! ” he exclaimed, laying a detaining hand upon his arm, “ I am delighted to see that you have been as much gratified as myself by Lady Rawleigh's inimitable waltzing. I thought it perfect last night at Ash Bank,—but positively her accomplishments rise, like Garrick's acting, to the level of the audience. By the way, you did not patronize Lady Olivia's green goose and syllabub festivities ? I was afraid you were growing too fashionable to be seen with you wife ; and that I, and Thornton, and Wandesford, should be left for the remainder of the season to the odium of uxorious devotion.”

“ I had business in town ; and had no idea the thing would last till so late an hour.”

“ Nor would it,—for we all had ordered our carriages at seven o'clock,—but Lady Rawleigh put so much life and spirit into the affair, that there was no getting away. Assisted by Morse, she

waltzed the whole ball-room into animation; and aided by Lord Calder, doubled the stake at the *écarté* table. Lady Barbara was quite amused by the novice-like zeal of her friend's speculations."

"I trust they may never mend in experience. I would as soon be married to a hyena as to a gambling wife."

"Thank you for the inference!—But I find we all grow reconciled to the vices of our better halves. Bab's passion for *écarté* appears to me an advantageous exchange for the levity of many of her female friends. And look at Thornton yonder,—who seems quite as much pleased that Lady Blanche should leave him to his political reveries, and sit whispering under the orchestra with the Prince de Guéménée. You see we are all three satisfied;—you with a waltzing,—he with a flirting,—I with a card-playing wife!"

The countenance of Sir Brooke certainly did not exhibit much evidence of the satisfaction announced by his companion; but he judged it unnecessary to favour a fashionable echo, such as Dynley, with his conjugal theory and practices. Gladly would he have escaped all further ordeal on the subject by pursuing the recreant Frederica to the arms of Lord Calder. But Dynley was not to be shaken off; and now summoned to his aid a tall scraggy-looking man standing near them, whose restless twinkling gray eyes seemed to wander on a voyage of discovery towards all points of the room at once. Elevated above the crowd, like the Eddystone light-house, he uplifted his gaunt ungainly figure in defiance of contend-ing tides,

"Indice! my worthy friend," cried Dynley, "you who, like Andes,

Look from your throne of clouds o'er half the world,

prithee reassure poor Rawleigh respecting his lady's safety. He is afraid she may be shipwrecked against some fat dowager for want of his pilotage. So 'prate of her whereabouts' like a good Christian as you are; and procure me the pleasure of his company five minutes longer."

Sir Brooke bowed stiffly to the grim apparition; with whom, as a reputed jackal to the clubs, and court-circular to the dowagers, he made it a point of conscience to maintain a refrigerating distance. But Indice had at all times too much to say to be repulsed by the coldness of an auditor; and now fixed his glass inquiringly into his eye, with an officious determination to supply more than all the intelligence required.

"Lady Rawleigh, Dynley,—did you say? Lady Rawleigh—let me see—I noticed her just now in the tea-room with Sir Robert Morse,—

No, by the way,—*that* was an hour ago. She left it on Lord Calder's arm to go in search of the Duke of Draxfield; and I observed her afterwards talking to a very pretty girl, whom Putney informed me was daughter to *that* tallow-chandler whom her ladyship introduced last night to the écarté table at Ash Bank."

"But cannot you find her out for us?" persisted Dynley. "Steer by Lord Calder, and I dare say Lady Rawleigh will not be far off."

"You deserve to be an elder brother of the Trinity House, or editor of the nautical almanack," sneered Mr. Indice. "Calder and her ladyship are retreating arm-in-arm from one of the prolix narratives of Lady Caroline Covey. The dismay depicted in their faces I can well understand; having been twice attacked myself this evening by that inveterate Partlet; once, with the history of Sir Nigel's rheumatism, who is lying in bed after a dose of Dover's powders; and once, with a piece of steward's-room scandal about Wandesford and—"

"Well, well, never mind Lady Caroline. She takes care we shall none of us escape. But tell me, Indice, who do you mean by the tallow-chandler at Ash Bank? I was in the écarté room all the evening; and saw no person introduced to the table by Lady Rawleigh; on the contrary, she was sitting all the time in a window-seat, with Calder, playing blind stakes."

"I mean a good-looking fellow with dark hair, who is always about with the Guéménées and Axeters. He has a very pretty little snowdrop of a daughter,—a prodigious heiress, who they say is engaged to Launceston."

"You mean Mr. Waddlestone!" said Sir Brooke, calmly, unawed by having to pronounce so plebeian a name. "A man of very enlightened mind, I understand, and polished manners; who is much courted in the best society, although I have not at present the honour of his acquaintance. I wonder, Dynley, that you did not recognise him at Ash Bank; for you told me you had been in the habit of dining at his table, in Italy, three times a week."

"Did I? I make it a rule to forget where I dine; unless the chef or the cellar demand the distinction of a red cross in my pocket-book."

"Besides," added Mr. Indice, significantly, "now that Dynley writes himself a married man, heiress-hunting has become a superfluous exercise. It is quite as convenient to him now to eat his outlets at Calder House, as at any tallow-chandler's in the land. Vaux declares you have a catalogue of the houses belonging to real Amphitryons; that he could swear to the merits of any

man's *menu* by your manner of returning his bow; and that you dropped Lord Wroxworth's acquaintance the season he dropped his French cook."

"What else was there to recommend his dull, dry, rational coterie?" exclaimed Dynley, without attempting to deny the charge. "One could swallow even Lady Wroxworth's sententiousness in company with Vatel's filets; but by Jove, when I attempted them with boiled cod and a saddle of mutton, I found my digestion unequal to the trial."

At this juncture, Lady Margaret Fieldham, who by dint of some of those arts peculiarly known to superannuated beauties, had contrived to fasten herself upon young Rockingham for the space of a waltz and a quadrille, by leading him up and down the room in pretended quest of her chaperon, came in such immediate contact with her chaperon's husband, that there was no further excuse for trespassing on the patience of the unhappy Alfred.

"Sir Brooke!" she exclaimed, with a very picturesque start of amazement, "do I behold you here, in the lively possession of your faculties, three hours after Lady Rawleigh's assurance that you were in bed and fast asleep?"

"Asleep, but not in bed," muttered Dynley; while Rawleigh, who at all times detested Lady Margaret's grimaces, and had not yet forgotten her unlucky *entrée* in Charles-street, made as brief a reply as possible, in the hope that she would pass on, and pursue elsewhere her flirtation with the unhappy boy she had inveigled into partnership. But this was impossible.

"Can you tell me," she cried, again addressing Sir Brooke, "in what mysterious corner Lady Rawleigh has hidden herself? We have had a long and hopeless chase after her; and no one can give us any tidings of her retreat. But I need not detain *you* any longer in the pursuit," she continued, dropping the arm of her partner, stiffened by her obstinate adhesion. "I have no doubt Sir Brooke will be kind enough to take care of me, till we discover the lost treasure."

The baronet having reluctantly accepted the charge imposed upon him, unwilling to prolong the responsibility of so valuable a guardianship, immediately attempted to make his way towards the spot pointed out by the malicious interference of Dynley and Indice. But on reaching the sofa, the guilty parties had again disappeared. No traces of Lady Rawleigh were to be discovered!

"I told you so!" lisped Lady Margaret, enchanted at the prospect of a new tour of the room. "I am persuaded Lady Rawleigh is in possession of Fortunatus's invisible girdle; for this

is just the manner she has contrived to evade me the whole evening. However, under *your* auspices I shall persevere."

Sir Brooke, who had not yet discovered how fluently fine ladies can fib when occasion, or even when no occasion requires, firmly believed that his wife had thrown off Lady Margaret's company on entering the room, and most unhumanely withdrawn her protection ever since; while Lady Margaret, seizing the opportunity for a few interjections and superlatives, amused herself as she dragged along on his arm by expressing that she was most horribly tired, positively expiring with fatigue. "Perhaps you will exert your influence in my favour," she murmured, persuaded that they should not encounter her chaperon for the next half-hour, "and persuade Lady Rawleigh to allow you to inquire for the carriage?"

"Certainly—certainly."

"There is nothing I abhor so much as wearing a ball threadbare.—But really Lady Rawleigh is growing *such* a rake, that I scarcely know how we shall persuade her to tear herself away."

"Frederica seldom stays anywhere after one o'clock," replied her companion, in the relenting veracity of his honest heart.

"Oh, my dear Sir Brooke, pardon me!—I saw her at Lady Blanche Thornton's after four."

"Then it was to oblige some troublesome young lady whom she had undertaken to chaperon;—for Lady Launceston's infirm state of health did not permit her daughter to contract the habit of late hours."

"Very true!—But Miss Rawdon and Lady Rawleigh, you know, are two different persons. The latter, well aware of your wish that she should amuse herself in her own way, of course indulges her natural predilections and charming vivacity. She was the admiration of the whole room last night at Ash Bank; and I heard the Prince de Guéménée observe to Lady Blanche, how much spirit Lady Rochester's set had infused into her character."

"Frederica possesses the instinctive liveliness of youth!" observed Sir Brooke, willing to repay in kind the sarcasms of his amiable companion.

"I expect she will turn all heads in Warwickshire," continued Lady Margaret, reclining her own most lackadaisically on one shoulder. "I heard her inviting the Duke of Draxfield, and the Axeters and Wandefords, to meet her at Leamington in the summer; besides that singing man, Sir Vincent Randall, and Mr. Vaux."

"Leamington!" involuntarily ejaculated Sir Brooke, to whom this disposal of the summer months was as new as it was repugnant.

"And I find you are to be steward of the races, and will fill Rawleighford for the occasion, and do the honours of the county in proper style. Ah, there is Lady Rawleigh at length;—yonder,—standing in the doorway with Sir Robert Morse."

And pressing hastily towards her, they continued to reach the spot just as her ladyship, whose back was turned towards them, was in the act of receiving Lord Calder's parting bow. Finding Sir Robert Morse resolutely attach himself to her side so as to impede the possibility of confidential discourse, his lordship had wisely determined on retreat; and Sir Brooke had the satisfaction of overhearing his beloved Frederica whisper to her friend, at parting, "You will hear from me to-morrow, unless you prefer calling in Bruton-street on the following day, when I will be prepared for your visit."

"I think you cannot doubt that I joyfully accept the alternative," replied Calder in a significant voice as he turned into the anteroom; and Frederica at the same moment perceiving her husband and Lady Margaret, exclaimed to the latter, "Ah! you are come at last. Perhaps, if you have done dancing, it may not be disagreeable to you to have the carriage called? I am quite ready."

No further pretext offering itself for delay, Sir Brooke had shortly afterwards the agreeable task of escorting one sullen and one silent lady down stairs. Lady Margaret was angry with her unsuccessful evening, and the prospect of having her ball-dress crushed by the unwelcome intrusion of a third person into the chariot; and Lady Rawleigh was anticipating the embarrassing conjugal tête-à-tête which would follow their departure from Lord Huntingfield's door. Both were erroneous in their calculations. Sir Brooke was in a temperament of mind and body to find the night air extremely refreshing; and having formally handed them to the carriage, he declared his intention of walking home.

Whether the exercise, the atmosphere, or the solitary self-communing with which they were associated, produced a soothing effect on his irritated nerves—or whether his very just suspicion that Lady Rawleigh had retired to the sanctuary of her dressing-room previous to his arrival, determined him to postpone the explanation which now appeared inevitable,—it would be difficult to determine. But it is certain that poor Rawleigh, like other politicians, found it expedient to adjourn the debate, or perhaps the division; and defer till the leisure of the following morning, his remonstrances, explanations, prohibitions, and menaces.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Yet if you were not so severe
 To pass my doom before you hear,—
 You'd find upon my just defence
 How much you've wronged my innocence.

HUDIBRAS.

VAIN are the calculations of mortal man! Long before the heavy eyes of the honourable member for Martwich had thrown off the influence of Mr. Derenzy's heated wines and Mr. Willis's heated rooms, and opened on the cheering prospect of a domestic squabble, Lady Rawleigh had quitted the house!—No elopement, however,—no separation,—no scandal. A family incident of ordinary occurrence had summoned her to Charles-street.

It is true that when Lady Launceston's note, requesting an early visit from her dear child was placed in her hands, Frederica's affectionate heart indulged in an apprehension that the occurrence originating such a demand on her mother's part, was not only of an extraordinary but of an alarming nature. But after hurrying on her morning-dress, and hastening, breakfastless and on foot, to her old home, she had the satisfaction to find Lady Launceston up, and dressed; and seated before her wonted allowance of chocolate and French rolls.

"My dear love!" she cried, as Lady Rawleigh entered the dressing-room, "how kind of you to obey my summons so early. I had not a notion of seeing you for four hours to come. For I heard you were not in bed till three, and Camomile assures me that ten hours rest is not more than sufficient for a delicate female. A mechanic may do with seven;—a robust man with eight;—a person in the decline of life with nine;—and a woman of nervous temperament with ten."

"Thank you, dearest mamma. But I assure you *my* temperament is not at all nervous? or your mysterious note would have reduced me to hysterics. What *has* happened?—Why are you anxious for an interview with me?—I was afraid you were seriously indisposed."

"No, my dear, much as usual. A little hurried perhaps yesterday; for Camomile, after feeling my pulse, judged it necessary to see me in the evening; and even hinted that I might not be the worse for a grain of cynogloss in my julep before I went to bed. But with the help of his agreeable conversation, I managed to get on without it; and I think I may say on the whole, that thank God, I rested pretty well."

"Your looks certainly confirm your own account, but—"

"When Wrightson was putting on my cap this morning, I fancied I had got a little headache, and that it might proceed from rheumatism. For if Camomile *has* a fault, it is the habit of throwing the door wide open on its hinges when he is leaving the room. I never ring the bell for him, for fear they should open the street-door before he has closed mine. I even called for my vinaigrette, and thought I might perhaps be laid up for the rest of the day;—*that* was just when I despatched my little note to *you*, my love. But since I have taken a few mouthfuls of chocolate—(genuine *chocolat de santé* which Olivia brought over for me from Paris), I trust I have got rid of all unpleasant symptoms. If it were not for my sad loss—"

"Loss?—What?—Who?"

"My dear Frederica, I begin to doubt whether you have breakfasted? You look quite pale and fagged. Do, my love, let Wrightson bring another cup and saucer, and try a little of Olivia's chocolate; it will do you good."

"Pray set my mind at ease! I see poor Chloe is in good health! To what loss are you alluding?"

"Lucy's society, my dear. Miss Elbany has been obliged to leave town, on a visit to her friends; and I am sadly perplexed how to get on without her."

"I think I *will* have some of Lady Olivia's chocolate," said Lady Rawleigh, ringing the bell for Wrightson, and drawing a chair opposite that of her mother. "It has an exquisite flavour of vanille. Will you spare me a roll, mamma? I have not felt so famished this month past. Do you know it is quite delightful to come and breakfast here, this dear room reminds me of so many pleasant days. It quite puts me in spirits."

"So it does Launceston. He often comes and breakfasts with Lucy and me; and really he is so gay and entertaining, that he makes me quite another creature for the remainder of the morning. Ah! we shall both miss poor dear Lucy!"

"And when did Miss Elbany leave you?"

"The day you went down to Ash Bank."

"Indeed!" said Lady Rawleigh, reddening with a sudden mistrust of the motive and destination of her journey. "And what called her away so suddenly?"

"Family business—some near relative returned from abroad, I believe. Wrightson went down with her into Sussex in a post-chaise, and returned the following day."

"And how did my brother bear his disappointment about the riding party?"

"Very ill, as you may suppose; for he had set his heart upon

getting Lucy on horseback. But it all turned out for the best; for Lady Derenzy is come up from Twickenham, for a day or two, to meet her niece, Lady Sophia Lee, who is just arrived from Paris—(Colonel Rhyse's cousin, my dear)—and she wrote a very civil note, saying, that as you were absent, Lady Sophia would take it as a very particular favour to have the use of your horse; (she is a great invalid, you know, and cannot exist without air and exercise)—and so Sir Brooke and your brother, and his friend Rhyse, made it a point to escort her; and a very pleasant ride they had!"

"I rejoice to hear it!" said Frederica, with warm sincerity; delighted to be thus relieved from a share of her grievances. "I always liked Lady Sophia before she married that old General Lee. I believe the match was entirely one of Lady Derenzy's making. She accepted the Cupid on crutches, to escape from the tediousness of that horrible coterie at Twickenham; and the fancy for equestrian exercise she has evinced ever since, arises, I suspect, from her eagerness to evade his society a few hours in the day."

"An ungenerous suggestion, my dear child; I assure you Camomile is far from thinking well of her. Between ourselves, he has hinted to me that her liver is affected."

"That her liver-complaint is affected, I verily believe. But she is a very pleasant creature, and I am glad she is come back. She will render the Derenzys a degree more supportable."

"Ah! my dear child, do not let the society of your gay friends—these Rochesters, Dynleys, and Thorntons—create a distaste for that of your husband's relatives. They all behaved very handsomely and kindly on your marriage; and when you know more of the world, Frederica, you will discover the value of being connected with persons who 'work no evil.' The Derenzys may not be very fashionable, or very entertaining. But they are your well-wishers, and incapable of—"

"Thank you, thank you, dearest mamma," cried Lady Rawleigh, blushing with a conviction of the excellence of her mother's counsels and of her own flippancy. "I trust I am incapable of neglecting your admonitions;" and she kissed the pale delicate hand affectionately extended towards her, with a glow of tenderness towards the superior qualities of her mother's nature. If any one had at that moment whispered to her the possibility that she might learn to indulge in follies such as could give pain to Lady Launceston, she would have repelled the charge with indignation.

"Do you know, my love," resumed Lady Launceston, gratified by a warmth on the part of her daughter such as she had not lately experienced, "I am far from comfortable about Sir Brook-

He sat with me yesterday morning for nearly two hours—finding me rather low after Lucy's departure, and seemed so absent, and looked so hollow about the eyes, that I am beginning to fear the late hours and confinement of his parliamentary duties do not agree with him. They never did with your poor dear father, which was the reason Lord Launceston troubled himself so little about them. But well do I recollect that, after the heat and worry of Lord Melville's trial, he was obliged to take the Cheltenham waters for six weeks; and had two, if not three, fits of the gout in the course of the year."

"But Rawleigh is not yet arrived at the season of that patriarchal malady; and I have not observed that he is looking ill. All men grow fidgety and restless in London; incessantly pining after their plantations and harvests, and receiving tiresome letters from their bailiffs. I really think there should be an Act of Parliament to prevent landed proprietors from straying beyond the boundaries of their own avenues."

"And their wives, who appear just as fond of Almack's and the Opera, as if they had not an acre on earth?" said Lady Launceston, smiling. "By the way, my dear Fred., Olivia will have it that Rawleigh is uneasy on your account; that he is not half satisfied about your intimacy with Mrs. Ershyne."

"Louisa is my old friend and acquaintance; and you, dear mamma, were never displeased by our intimacy."

"In those days, I was willing to attribute her giddiness to the inexperience of girlhood. I never like to judge harshly of very young people, because aware of the difficulty of penetrating their real disposition. Their apparent docility often arises from hypocrisy, created by the severity of those in authority over them. While their seeming levity as frequently proceeds from the artless vivacity of a buoyant temperament. It is not till the ship is fairly launched, that the faults of its construction can be ascertained. It is not till the girl attains the freedom of the matron, that her true nature discovers itself."

"And what is there in that of Louisa to alarm Sir Brooks and Lady Olivia?"

"Nay! my dear child, you who live so much in her society are better qualified to judge than I can be, who mingle little in the world, and turn a deaf ear to all matters of scandal. For my own part, I am apt to regard her as frivolous and selfish. But Rawleigh considers her a coquette and a flirt; and your brother declares that she is a guady insect, with a very venomous sting."

You are come in happy time to answer for your calumnies!"

Frederica to Lord Launceston, who now entered the room,

with an air of listlessness very different from the animation of his usual morning salutation to Miss Elbany. "Pray what have you to say against my friend Louisa?"

"More than you will like to hear!—In the first place, that she is decidedly *not* your friend.—In the next, that I heartily wish you were not hers," replied his Lordship, sauntering to his accustomed elbow-chair.

"Take a rule to show cause," said his sister, "or prepare to be thought a libellist."

"Mrs. Erskyne will take care to authenticate my libels. I met her walking *tête-à-tête* with Putney, in one of those whispering galleries among the gravel-pits in Kensington Gardens, a few mornings ago, at an hour when nothing but mischief causes fine ladies to be stirring."

"And what were you doing among the whispering galleries at such an hour?"

"Airing Chloe, of course, like a dutiful son!"—

"No dogs admitted," said Frederica.

"Ordered, also, that the keepers do turn out all improper persons."—And yet you see Mrs. Erskyne contrived to intrude. No rule without an exception."

"There, Launceston, you have driven mamma away with your scandalous chronicles. You know how much she dislikes gossip.

"She dislikes everything a virtuous woman ought to dislike," said Lord Launceston in a low voice, looking affectionately towards his mother, who was leaving the room.

"No, no, my love,"—said the kind old lady. "William knows my habits. He knows he has said nothing I disapprove. But I have Camomile's orders to take six turns in the drawing-room or any other cool apartment, every morning, immediately after my chocolate. It is the only exercise I am allowed in the course of the day; and if anything interferes to prevent it, I am sure to grow flushed and feverish towards evening. Miss Elbany generally entertains your brother. For I prefer Wrightson's arm to lean on, even to dear Lucy's.

"I am glad she is gone," observed Lord Launceston, as the door was carefully closed after the invalid by the obsequious hand of Wrightson.

"From the force of habit, I suppose. 'Dear Lucy' cannot always be spared for an early walk in Kensington Gardens."

"Dear Frederica cannot always be spared, to give audience to a brother's remonstrances."

"What, have you not finished your homily?—Have you any further strictures to pronounce on Mrs. Erskyne's proceedings?"

"A great many on those of Lady Rawleigh. I seldom find you alone; and do not wish to include Sir Brooke in my sorrow."

"Now ask yourself seriously, dear William,—are you qualified to play the monitor? Does your own conduct intitle you to be severe with mine?"

"A brother is always intitled to watch over his sister's honour. Do not reply to me with one of Mrs. Erskyne's flippant witticisms. On my soul, I am serious. I will admit my own career through life to have been everything that is disgraceful and contemptible.—But your brother's follies form no excuse for yours; and it is rather your knowledge of the straits and humiliation to which he has been reduced by profligate extravagance, that should serve as check and warning to your own."

Frederica, somewhat relieved to find that Lord Launceston's exhortations tended merely towards financial matters, breathed more freely. She forgot how much of personal indiscretion she had recently mingled with the disposal of her revenue.

"I assure you, my dear sister," he resumed, in a kinder tone, "there are few privations and mortifications I would not have undergone, in preference to hearing your name—my own dear Frederica's unblemished name—associated with those of the dupes and sharpers of fashionable life."

Lady Rawleigh started, as this consideration presented itself for the first time to her mind.

"If there be anything repugnant to the feelings of a man of honour, or woman of delicacy," persisted Lord Launceston, "it is a female gambler;—a cold-blooded, calculating, mercenary woman, who—"

"Nay," interrupted Frederica, feeling this to be a very exaggerated interpretation of her offence, "foolish as I have been, my conduct has not earned so severe a sentence of reprobation. I can honestly assure you that 'calculating' and 'mercenary' are epithets most unjustly applied."

"Do you mean to deny that you have lost a large sum of money at écarté, within these few days?"

"Certainly not. To oblige Lady Olivia, I contributed to the stakes at Ash Bank; and knowing nothing, and seeing nothing of the game, lost beyond—very far beyond my calculations. But of all the follies and vices of this world, play is the last to offer any attraction in my eyes."

"So have I often thought and sworn when first entering the career of many a vice and folly. No one becomes a deliberate victim to his own weakness. It is presumption that blindfolds him to his ruin."

"But, believe me, I am not blindfolded. My first unlucky essay has given me little encouragement to persevere on the fatal path."

"You have all the encouragement that flattery and bad example can afford. I know these people better than you do; and avoid their society because I do know them."

"This is ungenerous!" cried Lady Rawleigh. "The indiscretion which has misled me into losing a portion of my allowance at the card-table, does not authorize you to injure the character of our equals in rank and respectability."

"Character ← Respectability?" reiterated Lord Launceston. "How long is it since either of those terms was applied to Lady Rochester, unless by your unsuspicuous and inexperienced self? Frederica, if I dare unfold to your pure ears facts connected with the reprobate women whom you pride yourself on making your associates, your pure heart would shrink from the contact."

"Hush, hush!" cried Lady Rawleigh, laying her hands on his lips. "Believe me, I have no predilection whatever for the pursuits or habits of Lady Rochester or her set, and very little partiality towards themselves. That they maintain a high eminence in fashionable society, you will not deny; and finding them not only disposed to court me into their circle, but the circle itself unusually animated and agreeable, I have naturally returned again and again to Calder House. Lady Derenzy—Rawleigh's near relative and privy councillor—has incessantly advised me to cultivate the acquaintance, as highly advantageous."

"Lady Derenzy knows about as much of the modern world, as the ghost of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, were it let loose on the earth. She estimates Lady Rochester according to the date of her husband's peerage; not according to the enormities of her moral conduct. But it is not alone to advise and reprove, my dear Fred., that I enter into this vexatious discussion. My object is to remind you of your claims on the friendship and assistance of your brother. I hear you have been robbed of a considerable sum by these people; and for works I would not have you destroy your husband's confidence by demands of such a nature. I have no doubt," continued Lord Launceston, attempting to assume a gayer tone, as he suddenly produced a pocket-book, "that you have the strange presumption to exaggerate my thriflessness and poverty. But though on the point of selling my coronet to an heiress, I assure you, Fred., I am very far from bankruptcy; and you will seriously oblige by applying this money to—"

"My dear, dear brother!" cried Lady Rawleigh, throwing her arms round Launceston's neck, while her eyes glistened with h-

tears, "I seem to have plunged myself into difficulties and disgrace, only to become fully acquainted with the affectionate kindness of my nearest relatives. Believe me, I have no present occasion to trespass on my husband's generosity. My pin money, with the addition of a little gift forced on my acceptance by my aunt Olivia, will more than defray this heinous debt; and I have only to regret that she should have lessened my gratitude by perplexing you with tidings of my imprudence."

"Lady Olivia? On my honour I have not had a syllable of communication with her since the breakfast. Lady Olivia? Why, for the next week she will be incapable of uttering a sentence unconnected with the damage done to her lawns, and the havoc committed in her cellar. No, my dear sister. My intelligence proceeded from a very sincere admirer of yours;—a man not quite so high in your conceit as Calder and his brother libertines, though more freely admitted into your favourite gang than I should have supposed likely;—I mean my future father-in-law,—Mr. Waddlestone."

"That impertinent man seems to make it his business to interfere in my concerns!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, with a pettish recollection of his advice to Lady Olivia. "But with respect to his acceptance in Lady Rochester's set, I do not believe him to be on terms of even the most distant acquaintance with any one of the party. On the contrary, several of them questioned me last night, at Almack's, concerning your Leonora, who was there with Madame de Guéménée; and retracted every word they had uttered in her praise, when they heard her name."

"There is not one of their tribe,—from Semiramis Rochester down to that deadly-night-shade-bud, Mrs. Erskyne,—who is worthy to touch the hem of her garment!" cried Lord Launceston, with spirit. "Leonora is the

Youngest virgin daughter of the skies;

and so far as I may be permitted to influence her destiny, rely upon it, she shall never become corrupted by association with the Rochester faction. No, Frederica, no!—there are still, thank Heaven, women to be found in our own rank of life, who reconcile a cheerful indulgence in the pleasures of society with unsullied purity in their domestic character; and without making a recluse of my wife, I am satisfied that I can preserve her from the contact of the vicious and degraded,—the female flirt and female gamester."

"And how do you intend to regulate her intimacy with your friend, Miss Elbany? Ah! Launceston, Launceston! I fear there is something of the Tartuffe in your admonitions."

Lord Launceston turned from his sister, and began to examine some Chinese puzzles, in order to conceal his embarrassment.

"The more I see of Miss Waddlestone, who in spite of the odiousness of her parents, I admit to be one of the most delightful and captivating girls I ever beheld,—the more I am inclined to blame your levity of conduct towards her," persisted Lady Rawleigh.

"I am sensible," replied her brother, entering with evident reluctance into the subject, "that I appear to be playing a most unworthy part. Unfortunately I am so hampered with promises and engagements, that I cannot at present attempt exculpation. All I can do is to entreat you will suspend your judgment, and rely on your brother's integrity for the result; and beg you will not enter into any discussion of the Elbany affair with Lady Sophia Lee, who is just arrived; and who, for my sins, is intimately connected with those insufferable Trevelyanians."

"What can my poor cousin Mary have to do with your conduct towards Leonora, or that odious companion of mamma's?"

"Nothing very ostensible, certainly. And yet, Frederica, were I at liberty to deal candidly with you on the subject,—were I to acknowledge the profound impression—the idolatry—the infatuation which Lucy Elbany has—"

"I will not listen to such sacrilegious confessions. I hear my mother's step on the stairs; and if you persist in these humiliating sentiments, will fairly place before her the mischiefs in which she has inconsiderately entangled her son."

"Only one word more on the subject, and I have done. Can you give me any insight into the motive of Lucy's abrupt departure from town; and have you any idea when she will return to Charles-street?"

"Mamma informs me that one of her vulgar relatives has arrived unexpectedly from abroad;—probably some purser-uncle in the West India fleet, or some cousin returned from Swan River."

"If it were a brother returned from transportation," cried Lord Launceston, "it would make no difference in my veneration for *her*. I feel that life is insupportable during her absence!"

"Then you are acting in a most unjustifiable manner towards the Waddlestone family," replied Frederica, with spirit. But her mother at that moment entering the room, followed by Countess Ronthorst, there was no further possibility of remonstrance.—They were soon engaged in a discussion on the comparative

merits of calcined magnesia ; that of Godfrey,—Savory,—Tebbs,—Henry,—Sanger,—which caused poor Lady Launceston's eyes to sparkle with earnestness.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A plain troosey suits my station better
Than these new fanglements. Lord me no lords !
I hate such pyes, 'quipped I' the gaudy spoil
Of Madam Juno's prying popinjay.

DEKKER.

At his mother's request, Lord Launceston proceeded to Bruton-street, to acquaint Sir Brooke with the cause of Frederica's absence, and entreat his company to dinner ; and poor Lady Rawleigh, whose heart had relented towards him from the moment of learning his innocence in the Mameluke affair, began to anticipate with eagerness a family reunion in Charles-street, secure from the anhoyance of Miss Ellony's presence, and preclusive of a final restoration of conjugal confidence.

But there is a special providence in the appointment even of a family-dinner ; and Lord Launceston, who was not anxious for a second edition of Countess Ronthorst's pharmacopœia, soon afterwards put his head into the dressing-room to announce that he had found Rawleigh engaged in some sort of parliamentary imbroglio with Mr. Lexley and Sir Mark Milman ; and that Sir Brooke had promised to dine in Queen Anne-street to meet the Lees. Lord Launceston bounded down stairs before his sister had time to enter into any further inquiries ; and thus poor Frederica was doomed to another day's alienation from home and from her husband, and the tedious importunity of a morning of commonplace visiting.

Never had she felt so impatient of her mother's humdrum intimates. She envied even the moping linnet in the dingy drawing-room of Mrs. Martha Derenzy ; and returned home at night so dispirited and overwearied in mind and body, that even Sir Brooke Rawleigh's knock on his return from the House, failed to dispel her leaden slumbers.

But another and less welcome knock was destined to assail the door in Bruton-street early the following morning. On entering the drawing-room, Lady Rawleigh had the mortification to discover that the contrarious Ruggs in remitting her a bank-bill for two hundred, and a bank-note for twenty pounds, under cover to "Sir B. Rawleigh, Bart., M.P., &c. &c. &c." had thought proper to address a few words to his patron in the envelope, on some natter of Swedish turnips, or Ruta Baga, which placed at Sir

Brooke's disposal the secret of her extensive demand on his agent: and though the presence of Mr. Richard Derenzy, who was seated at the breakfast table prosing away during the process of his cousin's bread and butter, rendered all comment on the subject impossible, it was evident from the manner in which Rawleigh placed these paper securities beside her coffee-cup, that his surprise and mistrust were strongly excited.

Mr. Richard,—good soul,—as unsuspicuous of the motive of her ladyship's blushes of acknowledgment, as of the possibility of a disagreement between two young persons in the honey-year of their matrimonial life, took it into his head, as country cousins are apt to do, to wax jocose touching Lady Rawleigh's absence from the family dinners of the two preceding days. Frederica and her ruffled moiety had the satisfaction of being informed, with a knowing smile, that they were "quite a fashionable couple;—lived apart as people of *ton* and the figures on a Dutch weather-glass ought to do;"—and all the other cut-and-dry witticisms, in which underbred people delight; and to which newly married, or jealous, or gouty persons, are subjected by especial patent.

"I assure you, Lady Rawleigh, you missed a very agreeable party yesterday," said Mr. Richard, with a little authoritative nod. "Dear Lady Derenzy was in charming spirits, and full of anecdote. She gave us the whole history of the establishment of the blue-stocking club; some original anecdotes of the court of the Princess Augusta of Wales; and the adventures of the Duchess of Kingston."

"I have often heard her eloquent on those topics," said Frederica, drily.

"But Sir Brooke will, I am sure, confirm my opinion that she excelled herself yesterday. My wife and daughters were observing, as we drove home, that, after all, no one equals in vivacity, information, and *bon ton* our dear Lady Derenzy."

Lady Rawleigh might have observed, with equal justice, that she had often heard *them* eloquent on that topic before.

"Then, we had that charming person, Mr. Broughley; a perfect Encyclopedia,—a library of general knowledge."

"A person," added Mr. Richard, in the measured tone of what is called a sensible middle-aged man, "whose conversation, like an instructive book, may not be calculated for the atmosphere of a fashionable drawing-room, but who is a valuable and edifying member of the community."

"I was glad to see General Lee looking so much the better for his residence abroad," observed Sir Brooke, getting a little impatient. "He, I grant you, is a delightful companion; so gracious, moderate, and kind-hearted, that his presence always tends

soften down the asperities of other people. One is afraid of appearing peremptory, selfish, or opinionated, in company with so gentlemanly an old man."

" You cannot, however, extend the former part of your compliment to Lady Sophia. She, poor thing, is miserably altered."

" She does not, I hope, appear to have suffered in health?" said Lady Rawleigh.

" She always is, or fancies herself an invalid."

" I intend walking to see her after breakfast, if Sir Brooke has leisure to accompany me as far as Kirkham's hotel," said Frederica. " If not, perhaps, Mr. Derenzy, you will oblige me by becoming my escort?"

" Surely you have some engagement at home?" inquired the astonished husband, who had by no means forgotten the mysterious rendezvous given at Almack's to Lord Calder.

" No!" replied Lady Rawleigh, blushing deeply, and as he feared, guiltily, " none that require my presence. Are you able to accompany me?"

" Certainly," replied Sir Brooke, more and more amazed by her inconsistency. While Frederica proceeded to her dressing-room to equip herself for the visit and to enclose in an envelope, addressed to Lord Calder, " with Lady Rawleigh's compliments," those luckless notes which it had cost Obadiah Ruggs so many pangs to emit from his strong box. Having despatched the packet to Calder House by the hands of her footman, she returned to the drawing-room, and a deliberate saunter along the shady side of the streets brought them to Kirkham's hotel, and decided the important fact that " Lady Sophia Lee was at home." Sir Brooke, having already paid his ceremonious visit of welcome to the General, took leave of Frederica at the foot of the stairs, promising that the carriage should be sent for her at two o'clock.

At so early an hour, Lady Rawleigh had anticipated the pleasure of an interview with Lady Sophia unrestrained by the presence of morning visitors. But the General was a man of old-fashioned habits, and old-fashioned hours; and Frederica, on entering his apartments, found the hum of general conversation established in an extensive circle. Accustomed to exist in a crowd, Lady Sophia was, however, so little embarrassed by the extent of her levee, that she instantly made her way towards the door with an exclamation of delight, and folded Lady Rawleigh in her arms; while the General rose from his seat, with his usual air of courteous high-breeding, to receive as a matron and kinswoman the beautiful woman he had left a timid unmeaning girl.

After glancing round the circle, and observing that it included

the Prince de Guéménée, Lord Vardington, Lord Wroxworth, and two or three olive-coloured foreigners, Frédérica found herself eagerly withdrawn by Lady Sophia towards a distant extremity of the room, where their gossiping received no interruption from the discussions of the General's associates.

"My dearest Fred," cried her ladyship, with earnest cordiality, "how little did I dream, when I last saw you, measuring sal-volatile in the dressing-room in Charles-street, that I should find you on my return to England installed in the Derenzy clan! My cousin, Horatio Rhyse, was desperately in love with you; and I heard enough, from morning till night, of Frederica Rawdon, her virtues and accomplishments, to have made me hate any one less gentle and unpretending. But I always told him he was too poor for you. And now tell me a little about the change in your own destinies. I dined yesterday in company with Sir Brooke, (who was good-natured enough to lend me your horse and ride with me, the day before;) and you cannot imagine how delighted I was to find myself in possession of a companionable cousin, instead of the awkward boy who used to come home to us from Rugby, for the holidays, with two large red hands, which had outgrown the sleeves of his jacket. And now he is in parliament, and grown a man of the world; sends down his pretty wife alone to a fashionable breakfast; lends her horses to other ladies during her absence; and behaves, in short, quite like other people. Believe me, my dear Frederica, this is a marvellous point of civilization to have been attained by a member of the Derenzy family, who are full fifty years in arrear of their century."

"Sir Brooke is guided in his general conduct by the best of monitors, good plain sense, and an upright heart."

"A most proper, plausible, and conjugal sentence. It seems decreed in England, that all *plain* things *must* be good; and that virtue, like beauty, needs not the foreign aid of ornament. But now having abused and praised your husband to my heart's content, afford me some intelligence of a person who, when I last saw him, was neither plain nor good;—your brother—"

"Surely Launceston was one of your riding party the day before yesterday?" inquired Lady Rawleigh; "and you must know more than myself of his proceedings from Colonel Rhyse, who is his constant companion."

"The very reason I should mistrust his representations. Yes, I *did* ride in your brother's company. But what did I learn by such casual association, except that he had a blood horse, and a well-made hat? I want to hear something of his loves and hates, his friendships and attachments."

"William is too kind-hearted to hate anything. With respect to his attachments, he is said to be engaged to a soap-boiler's daughter."

"Hush, hush!" eagerly whispered Sophia, glancing towards the circle at the other end of the room; "have some consideration for his feelings!" And without the least comprehending the implication contained in this reproof, Lady Rawleigh was involuntarily reminded by Lady Sophia's air of mystery, of her brother's unaccountable anxiety that his friend Rhyse's cousin should not be made acquainted with the position of his love affairs. Frederica felt vexed when she recollects how nearly she had been on the point of betraying his secret.

"I am glad to see you have the grace to be ashamed of yourself," resumed Lady Sophia, in the same unintelligible strain; "and sincerely wish that Lord Launceston may follow your example. I am come back to England quite in the humour to throw down my gauntlet to him; and if he had not been so assiduous about your horse and my ride, he would have had to exhibit articles of the peace against me long before this."

"What can poor William have done to offend you?"

"That little mincing parvenu, Mrs. Woodington, whom I met at Paris, and who, as Viscountess Twadell, is on the point of returning to astonish London with a Rousseau worthy a Russian grand-duchess,—assured me he was exposing himself by his courtship of some governess, whom he would probably end by marrying."

"I think not, I hope not!" cried Lady Rawleigh. "But even were he tempted to so gross an act of folly, tell me, dear Lady Sophia, what interest have you in William and his peccadilloes? I imagined that you were scarcely acquainted with him?"

"Nor am I!—But he happens to be the source of misery to a person whom I dearly love."

"My dearest Lady Sophia,—you stimulate my utmost curiosity!—What can Launceston have done,—and whom do you mean?"

"It is not so much the things he has done, as the things he has left undone, that move my indignation. I lived four months at Rome in the same hotel with Lord Trevelyan; and found in Lady Mary all the virtues of a genuine Englishwoman, all the accomplishments of her adopted country, and all the beauty of an angel."

"Alas!" replied Lady Rawleigh, "your assurances only corroborate my previous impressions. Everything I have heard of my cousin Mary inclines me to believe her the most charming of women."

"Yet with all her attractions and the brilliancy of her worldly prospects, this infatuated girl will not be persuaded to overlook the

absurd engagement which contracted her to your brother, before either of them were out of their leading-strings! She has had half-a-dozen English coronets, and twice as many Italian and German principalities laid at her feet;—in many instances by men really deserving her regard; and Lord Trevelyan, who is growing infirm, is most anxious to see her happily married."

"It is really vexatious that she shou'd cling to an engagement which is evidently distasteful to Launceston."

"Vexatious?—Mary's pertinacity amounts to insanity. She is as romantically in love with your brother, as if he were the most devoted of Paladins;—will not allow a disparaging syllable to be uttered concerning him in her presence;—preserves his picture in a nankin frock riding on a Newfoundland dog, as a relic of their early attachment;—learns by heart every passage in yours and your mother's letters in which his name is mentioned;—and is, in short, as ridiculous on every point that concerns him, as if she had not a grain of understanding."

"I no longer wonder that Launceston is out of your good graces;—I am half inclined to banish him from mine," said Lady Rawleigh. "What can be done to bring either of them to their senses;—I greatly fear it is altogether a hopeless case with William. Do you think I may venture to write to my uncle on the subject of his new engagements?"

"Hush! do not raise your voice; Mr. Waddlestone will hear you. I suspect he has already caught some sentences of our debate."

"Mr. whom?"

"Your brother's friend, the soap-boiler," whispered Lady Sophia. "I would not hurt his feelings for the world. There are few persons for whom I retain a more sincere regard."

"Everyone is gone," replied Frederica, looking towards General Lee, "except the Prince de Guéménée and Lord Vardington."

"My dear coz., of what are you dreaming?—I am acquainted with no Lord Vardington I thought the title was extinct.—That tall dark man engaged in conversation with the General, is Mr. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

M'amuser, n'importe comment
 Fait toute ma philosophie !
 Je crois ne perdre aucun moment
 Hors le moment où je m'ennuie.
 Et je tiens ma tâche finie
 Pourvu que tout doucement
 Je me défasse de la vie.

PARNY.

THE arrival of Lady Sophia Lee produced a gradual change in the occupations of Lady Rawleigh, which proved equally satisfactory to her husband, her brother, and herself. Lady Sophia was not precisely such a companion as the mild and timid Lady Launceston would have selected for her daughter. She seemed to care nothing for the feelings of other people; and very little for her own. The influence of her callous philosophy was universal and unsparing. But she was a woman of unimpeachable character, strong understanding, and of the Derenzy family. Lady Launceston therefore made it a point to cement her friendship with Frederica by every courtesy in her power to offer: and had soon the satisfaction to perceive that their joint tenure of the Opera-box was the sole bond of amity remaining between Lady Rawleigh and Mrs. William Erskyne.

But if Lady Launceston, in the warmth of her heart, rejoiced over these changes, what was the rapture with which the alteration was hailed by Sir Brooke. Frederica, secure in Lady Sophia of a companion for her morning drives and afternoon rides, was no longer exposed to the peril of *tête-à-tête* with Lord Calder. The fatal miniature was displaying its exquisite beauties in the dressing-room in Charles-street; and Sir Brooke had gratefully bespoken a copy for his own at Rawleighford; while under sanction of General and Lady Sophia Lee, the mysterious Lord Vardington became, in his real character, a welcome visitor to the Rawleighs.

Under these favourable circumstances, he almost forgot to repine at the prolongation of the session; and if once or twice he was heard to hazard some murmuring allusion to the Warwickshire beech-woods, and Rawleighford strawberries, it was the opinion of all the aunts, uncles, and cousins Derenzy, that dear Sir Brooke had never been seen in such spirits.

By Miss Elbany's absence, too, Frederica appeared restored to her accustomed equanimity of nature. Her mother was now once more her own. Her jealous fears on her husband's account were wholly dispelled. Even her apprehensions that Lord Launceston would disgrace himself by a double perfidy towards Lucy and

Leonora, had in a great measure subsided. But happy as she was, and restored to the confidence of all who were dear to her, there was still a thorn among the roses, a fatal remembrancer of past follies, haunting, like the *memento mori* of the Egyptian festivals, the scene of all her enjoyments. She had never yet found courage to acquaint Sir Brooke with her losses at play ; and though deterred from the confession chiefly by the apprehension that it might be interpreted into a hint for pecuniary assistance, the sin of disingenuousness weighed heavy on her heart. Five weeks, too, were still to elapse previous to the quarterly payment of her pin money : and the price of the miniature and a few inevitable purchases, had reduced her stock within a few sovereigns of total exhaustion. No one indeed thought less of money than Frederica, because no one could have been placed more completely beyond its need. Nor till she found herself threatened with an empty purse, had a pecuniary care ever intruded into her mind. But she now became perplexed by a thousand vague presentiments. Every single knock at the door seemed annunciator of some trifling bill peculiarly addressed to her "separate maintenance;" some milliner's or shoemaker's, or haberdasher's, or bookseller's "small account." Whenever a wafered note was placed in her hands, she scarcely dared unfold it, from a dread of some authenticated memorial from a poor widow with half-a-dozen small children, or some starving labourer with a broken limb. Never had she been so morbidly sensitive to the wants of the poor ; never so fervent in her wishes for the preservation and prosperity of his Majesty's lieges ; and she would have preferred to see all Grosvenor-square blackened into ashes, rather than that a destructive fire should take place in the purlieus of St. Giles's. She was, in short, thoroughly humiliated by the consciousness of bankruptcy ; and Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford, with her diamonds, equipages, and pin money, would have as heartily rejoiced at the discovery of a fifty pound note in her dressing-case, as any of the memorializing widows or fractured bricklayers.

Meanwhile, the season held its course with more than its wonted intemperance of dissipation. Balls, concerts, dinner-parties, water-parties, breakfasts, picnics, were successively hailed in prospect, yawned over in endurance, and apostrophized as charming on the following week. A few new marriages, new scandals, and new ruinations, enlivened the scene. One mansion was devoted to white favours, one dishonoured by a divorce-bill, and another by that of an auctioneer pasted against the door-posts. Lady Barbara Dynley was said to have lost an alarming sum of money, and Mrs. William Erakyne a considerable amount of reputation.

While pondering over this latter contingency, and reflecting on the difficulty of offering advice to her giddy friend, Frederica was one morning assailed by Lady Sophia Lee.

"What are you doing with those broken harp-strings," cried she, as she hurried into the drawing-room, "and on what are you cogitating so profoundly?—Considering how to evade Mrs. Waddlestone's impending concert, and stay at home for the enjoyment of what our friend Lord George calls

The whithpered dweam of heartht allied
The pwethure of the thwilling hand?"

"Neither," replied Lady Rawleigh. "I am reflecting on the horrors of a bridal visit which Lady Olivia insists on my paying this morning, to her ci-devant friend, Mrs. Woodington."

"To Lady Twadell? Is that exquisite treat really vouchsafed us?—What a luxury. I trust you have not promised yourself to your aunt for the occasion; for I insist that we enjoy it together."

"With all my heart. Your carriage is here. Let us go immediately."

"On condition that you lend me some shabby old bonnet for the ceremony: some old Dunstable horror, such as you assume, to visit the poor in your Warwickshire village. I wish to gratify Lady Twadell by affording an advantageous contrast to her bridal finery. One should always be considerate towards the foibles of one's friends."

"Lady Twadell, I fancy, is as little yours as mine. But pray do not disfigure yourself this morning; for I wish you to take me afterwards to Lady Rochester's,—I have totally neglected her during your stay in town."

"I would not go near her for the value of Lady Twadell's trousseau! She is one of the few persons who expose me to the heavy responsibility of unchristian hatred!" cried Lady Sophia, with a degree of emotion such as Frederica had never before seen her exhibit.

"Indeed! I was not aware that any ungracious feeling subsisted between you. Before your arrival, I lived very much in that Calder House set: but neither my brother nor Rawleigh was pleased with the connexion."

"I know! I know! Before I had been twenty-four hours in town, one of your dear friends,—whom I will not name, because I think you would be justified in boxing her ears on detection,—informed me that 'poor dear Lady Rawleigh was exposing herself sadly on Lord Calder's account; that she owed him a vast sum of money; and that most people thought some very terrible dénoue-

ment would occur before the season was over.' Knowing *you*, I was not apprehensive. But knowing *him*, I felt anxious to do my part in breaking off so pernicious an intimacy. Pardon me if my officious zeal has sometimes tempted me to bestow on you an unreasonable measure of my tediousness."

"I am sure you cherish no such fear," cried Lady Rawleigh, affectionately. "I am, however, of your opinion that Lord Calder is a dangerous bosom friend for a woman of my age; and it is just as well that our intimacy was checked. And now, come and choose your bonnet from my ugliest assortment, and I promise you not to decoy you to Lady Rochester's, on any pretence."

"Whose flaunting liveries are those?" said Lady Sophia, as they stopped at the door of the new viscountess. "By the splendours of the hammercloth, I am tempted to believe that odious offset of the Dereazy tree, our cousin of Luttrell, is beforehand with us this morning."

"I rejoice that you judge so harshly of yonder Leadenhall-street equipage," said Frederica, laughing; "for it belongs to a lady who is so unlucky as to sail in the north of my opinion. Do you remember a certain Laura Mapleberry?"

"Who was laying active siege to Rawleighford when I quitted England? I recollect feeling terribly afraid that Lady Mapleberry might involve poor Brooke in the Oriental misdemeanour of polygamy; for she seemed to me to make love to him with her full battery of daughters."

"Fortunately the whole volley missed fire; and Laura consoled herself by marrying a yellowna bob,—a Sir Christopher Lotus,—

A puny insect shivering at a breeze,

whom they keep alive in cotton, like an exotic snake. When I am in an amiable frame of mind, I really pity the poor girl. For this little old man of the sea is as tiresome and malignant as any Afrit Genius released from the eye of a needle in the caverns of Caucasus."

Turning at that moment towards her companion, Frederica was surprised and shocked to perceive the countenance of Lady Sophia painfully agitated, while she involuntarily exclaimed, "How dreadful,—what a disgraceful meeting!—One woman who has sold herself for rank,—another for money,—another for—God forgive us!"

Before Lady Rawleigh could recover her amazement, they were ushered into the drawing-room of the bride; where, according to their anticipations, they found Lady Lotus accompanied by Miss Matilda Mapleberry, in the act of offering her congratulations. The room was redolent of orange-flowers, gardenias, heliotropes, and "

the most fragrant contents of the Woodington-park conservatories; nor was Frederica surprised that in such an atmosphere, the new Viscountess should assume an attitude of elegant languor, among the embroidered cushions of her sofa, and hold in her hand a flacon of aromatic salts encased in golden basket-work, which "ever and anon she gave her nose."

"My dear Lady Sophia," exclaimed the bride, without rising from her seat on their entrance, "how very kind of you to recollect me.—Lady Rawleigh, I am delighted to see you. Really among the crowds that beset me, it is refreshing to see one welcome face! Between Lord Twadell's numerous family connexions, and my own extensive acquaintance, I have never had a moment, since my return to England, to think of anything but thanking my friends for their flattering attentions; or, as you may suppose, I should have done something towards reforming the barbarisms, solecisms, and improprieties of this Gothic mansion."

"I see nothing that demands a change," replied Lady Rawleigh, with perfect simplicity; casting her eyes round the apartments, which were splendidly furnished, though not in the newest gloss of novelty.

"A bachelor's residence," said Lady Twadell, "cannot be expected to afford those little refinements which spring forth under the culture of a female hand."

"Certainly not," said Lady Sophia, resolved to discompose her affectation. "Lord Twadell will expect you to give a new aspect to things; and when you have had Banting and Morel, and got rid of all this obsolete lumber, the house itself will not be so *very* much amiss. Of course, when it is refitted, you will avoid the gaudy superabundance of gilding, by which it is now disfigured. Nothing is more thoroughly exploded than finery: left, by general consent, to city knights and retired nabobs."

Lady Lotus grew fidgety on her chair; and Miss Matilda ventured a few incoherent sentences touching Chatsworth and Windsor Castle.

"I beg your pardon?" said Lady Sophia, interrogatively,—resolved to make her speak intelligibly; and Miss Mapleberry with some indignation found herself obliged to recapitulate her unlucky illustrations.

"Chatsworth?—Windsor?"—said Lady Sophia, with a smile. "Of course, I was not alluding to palaces. I spoke of our own middling sphere of life. It would be absurd indeed in Lady Rawleigh, Lady Twadell, or myself, to emulate the magnificence of persons of illustrious rank."

The new Viscountess had recourse to her salts. To be compared with a country baronet's wife,—with a ladyship by courtesy!

"These pictures, too," continued Lady Sophia, "you will of course despatch to Lord Twadell's country seat?"

Lady Rawleigh longed to whisper to her that his lordship possessed only a tumble-down Castle Rackrent, mortgaged over rafters and roof, on the borders of the Bog of Allen.

"They are generally thought very fine," said Lady Twadell.—"Two of them are Rubens'."

"Yes, I recognise my old friends. The originals are in Prince Lichtenstein's gallery at Vienna. Excellent gallery-pictures, or even admissible in a fine old oak dining-room in the country. But a Rubens in a drawing-room facing the evening-sun, is almost too much for one in the months of June and July."

"You must send them to Woodington Park," said Lady Lotus, bringing up her forces to the support of her discomfited friend. "Did you ever see Woodington, Lady Rawleigh? One of the most beautiful places in England."

"You are partial, my dear Lady Lotus!" simpered the bride—"but in truth there seldom appears a series of the distinguished country seats of the kingdom, in which it is not included. It has been vignetted twice in Peacock's Repository."

"Surely the house is visible for some miles from the North-road?" inquired Frederica, without intending an epigram.

"The plantations not yet grown up?" said Lady Sophia. "That accounts for General Lee's ignorance of its whereabouts.—His father, Lord Frederick, had an old family seat in that neighbourhood, where the General's childhood was passed. But he could not bring himself to recollect Woodington. I conclude it has been built since he left the country."

Lady Twadell was on the point of making some bitter allusion to General Lee's antediluvian reminiscences, when it occurred to her that he had been fag at Eton to her own bridegroom the Viscount; and she was therefore forced to content herself with observing, "Woodington Park was sketched by Capability Brown, and completed by Repton. Picturesque Price used to say that the artificial water was a triumph of art."

"Talking of art," said Lady Sophia, "pray tell me, my dear Lady Twadell, how did you manage to get over the splendid trousseau I saw preparing for you in Paris?"

"I declare I hardly know. Some of Lord Twadell's people managed the business."

"They must have had some trouble. I saw a viscountess's

coronet embroidered on some dozens of dozens of garments in lawn and cambric, on the counters of half the lingères of the Rue de St. Honoré. Oh ! here is Lady Olivia Tadcaster, who will tell us how she manages these affairs. But then, *her* interest will always secure the name of one of the ambassadors, as a *passe-droit*."

Lady Olivia, however, always thought proper to select her own vein of loquacity; and after paying her compliments to her former *protégée* the Viscountess, towards whom she felt a slight pique for having accomplished a matrimonial barter without her intervention, admired the mechlin of her cap, and hinted that women of a certain age always did well to envelop the mysteries of their faces in similar framework, she turned suddenly to Lady Lotus.

"I fully intended calling on you this morning," said she, "if I could manage to get so far as Portland-place. But really it is so out of one's beat, that I keep a little list of my East Indian friends, directors' wives, and one or two Calcutta people, such as Lady Cabob and Mrs. Budgerow, whom I picked up one autumn at Cheltenham, that I may strike them all off in one morning."

"I should have been extremely sorry," said Lady Lotus, swelling with indignation, "had your ladyship taken the trouble of driving so far in compliment to *me*."

"Oh ! pray don't mention it," cried Lady Olivia, with spontaneous impertinence. "I should have thought nothing of it, only I have promised to be with Lady Axeter this afternoon ; who lives, you know, in Arlington-street, in the civilized part of the town ; to take her some little saleable trumperies which I have persuaded my worthy Ash Bank neighbours, the Miss Peewitz, to put out their eyes in manufacturing, for her Charity Bazaar.—And by the way, I certainly *will* buy Clara Peewit a pair of green spectacles, before I go back into Essex ; they cost little or nothing in the Burlington Arcade. As to her sister Maria, I wipe off my obligations to *her* by making over to her my patronage at the Missionary Society, Tract Association, and the Auricular Infirmary, for which I have no possible use.

"But to return to the motive of my visit," continued Lady Olivia, though she had never yet alluded to the subject. "I think, my dear Lady Lotus, I may say that I have satisfactorily executed your mission."

"I will not hear a word about it now," cried poor Laura, looking extremely uneasy, "or you will deprive me of the pleasure of your promised visit. I am in no hurry to acquaint myself with the result."

Notwithstanding the assiduity with which Lady Twadell now

attempted the task of amusing Lady Sophia and her friend, who were not likely to be interested in any affair pending between Lady Lotus and Lady Olivia, they managed to overhear the following rejoinder.

" Why, really nothing would give me greater pleasure than to wait on you, but you see, my dear ma'am, though my horses are only jobs, so that I can work them without compunction, I am obliged to have a little mercy on my servants; therefore, as we *have* met, I may as well give you Mrs. Waddlestone's answer at once. I told her, as you desired, how much you had been indebted to Mr. W.'s politeness at the races, and how long you had been anxious to make her acquaintance; that Mrs. Luttrell had promised to make the introduction at her ball, and all the rest of it. And she begged me to assure you, that—"

" Thank you—thank you," said the agonized Lady Lotus. " Having now expressed my thanks for the use of Mr. Waddlestone's carriage, I need not trouble your ladyship further on the subject."

" Oh! excuse me, the most important part of the negotiation remains unexplained. Mrs. Waddlestone requested me to say that she should make it a point to take an early opportunity of returning your card. But with respect to an invitation for you and the Miss Mapleberrys to her concert, she regretted to say that it was out of her power, the whole affair being under the arrangement of the Princesse de Guéménée and the Duchess of Whitehaven, with whom I fancy you are not acquainted."

Lady Lotus, with a face like scarlet, now rose to take leave, while Lady Sophia inquired of the viscountess, " You, of course, are going to Waddlestone House? It will be the best thing of the season, and a capital opportunity to show off your bridal splendours."

" Why really, just now," said Lady Twadell, oppressed with humility, " while the eyes of all the world are upon me, I wish to avoid the tax of going into public. Next year I shall be no longer a novelty, and subside into the multitude."

" You need not be afraid of any embarrassing distinction at the Waddlestones'," said Lady Sophia. " You will be outreroared by a whole herd of lions."

" Rossini is coming over from Madrid for the occasion; Fodor has promised to recover her voice for that one day; Paganini is to play on two violins with one bow: Pasta will sing an English ballad; and Malibran a Yankee comic song!—Don't be alarmed," said Lady Olivia, putting forth with great naïveté the announcements she had credulously received from Lord Launceston. " Y'

presence will scarcely be remarked among such a galaxy of wonders."

"Who are these Waddlestones?" persisted Lady Twadell, fastidiously. "People one can know without committing oneself?"

"That depends on the position of the parties," said Lady Sophia. "The Draxfields, Axeters, Wroxworths, Guéménées, Whitehavens, and persons of that stamp, can know them with perfect safety. I doubt whether you are yet sufficiently established in society to venture."

"I dare say I shall be forced there, whether I like it or not," said the bride, languidly. "Lord Twadell knows every one; and I have little doubt these Waddlestones will give him no peace till we promise to go."

"Lord Twadell was so shocked at my rashness in presenting Mrs. Waddlestone," said Frederica, "that you will meet with no compulsion from him on this occasion."

"Why surely you do not mean that all this fuss is about a party to be given by that dreadful soapboiler's wife?" cried the Viscountess, having again recourse to her salts. "What will the world come to!"

"Who can guess!" cried Lady Sophia, rising for departure. "But it is going to Waddlestone House; and I recommend you to join it, if you can diplommatize for an invitation. Good morning, Lady Twadell—I leave you to arrange the matter with Lady Olivia Tadcaster, who on such occasions is the most efficient plenipotentiary in Europe."

CHAPTER XXX.

Tells how each beauty of her mind and face
Was brightened by some sweet peculiar grace;
Tells how her manners, by the world refin'd,
Left all the taint of modish vice behind,
And made each charm of polished courts agree
With candid truth's simplicity
And uncorrupted innocence.

LYTTLETON.

BUT an entertainment was destined to precede the morning concert at Waddlestone House which, if less difficult of access, was far more eagerly sought after by the fashionable throng.

Lord Calder, although he usually restricted himself to a routine of hospitality of the highest order, but unmarked by mountebank displays to excite the criticisms of the newspapers and witticisms in the clubs, having discovered that Lady Rawleigh pertinaciously

abstained from appearing at his weekly *soirées*, and that she had declined two dinner-parties expressly framed in her honour, resolved on taking some marked step to allure her to his house. When they met in the nightly round of balls or parties, she received his attentions with the same gentle courtesy as heretofore ; so that he had no reason to apprehend any serious displeasure or estrangement on her part ; while the frank and lady-like demeanour of Lady Sophia Lee satisfied him that whatever feelings *she* might entertain towards him, her sentence was not for "*open war*." When he made his appearance in Lady Rawleigh's box at the Opera, Frederica received him without embarrassment, but made no effort to amuse or detain him ; and left his conversation wholly at Mrs. Erskyne's disposal, who seemed well satisfied to turn it to account. But this easy self-possession was far more attractive to a man accustomed to the arts and caprices of her sex, than flighty airs of coquetry.

It is generally asserted that men of dissolute habits entertain a pretty universal contempt for the female sex. But a dissolute man, unless degraded by unusual stupidity, possesses peculiar tact for distinguishing a woman whose conduct and sentiments are really unexceptionable, and entertains a holy reverence towards herself and them. Lord Calder had never misjudged Lady Rawleigh, even in her unguarded encouragement or the imprudent obligations she had contracted. He saw that he was indebted for his temporary advantage to some agency, the nature of which was inscrutable to his penetration ; and was now satisfied that her eyes had been opened to the true character of his views and feelings, either accidentally or by the interference of an officious friend.

There were circumstances, however, which tempted him to hope that she had entangled herself too deeply in his toils to release ; and as he found it impossible to obtain admission in Bruton-street, or address her at the Opera without danger from the mole-eared vigilance of the malicious Louisa, or even obtain her attention in general society, where her increasing popularity attracted the homage of half the distinguished young men of the day, he determined on sending out cards for a masque of the old school ; such as would render Calder House the rendezvous of the great world, and from whence Lady Rawleigh could scarcely absent herself without some very plausible excuse.

Frederica indeed entertained no such intention. Sir Brooke, Lord Launceston, Lady Sophia, all, were included in the invitation ; nor had there been anything in Lord Calder's conduct to require them to renounce the most brilliant *fête* of the season. In London society, it is by no means necessary to feel, or even affect,

slightest respect for the proprietors of those mansions where we drink our best champagne, or tread our liveliest measures; and more than one member of the fashionable world can boast a visiting list graced by the most illustrious names, and a ball-room crowded by the most distinguished guests, who is thought and spoken of with personal contempt.

The characters in the projected masque, which were expressly distributed by Lord Calder, were selected from Spenser's Faery Queen; and while Lady Rochester naturally appropriated to herself the dignities of Gloriana, Frederica found the part of the spotless Una tendered to her acceptance. But she immediately despatched a note to Lord Calder, declining any ostensible share in the pageant; and promising to join the circle in some group unconnected with the principal exhibition. On reflection, this was a plan that suited better with those of his lordship. He had laid at her feet the highest tribute the occasion afforded; and was sensible that her society would be more at his disposal if unfettered by a part in the drama.

All London was now excited to the highest pitch of frivolous eagerness. Artists of every denomination,—painters, sculptors, and poets,—authorities of every calibre, from the British Museum to Colnaghi's portfolios,—were laid under contribution; and select committees appointed in divers dwellings of the young and beautiful. Strings of pearls were tried in profusion among clusters of equally redundant ringlets, before many a gorgeous mirror; Persian pantoufles fitted on many a foot worthy to elicit the raptures bestowed by Rousseau on those of Madame D'Houdetot. And many a fair exclusive continued to lisp her declarations that "upon her honour she could not make up her mind with respect to her costume," many days after the said costume had been snugly deposited in the armoire of her dressing-room. Lord George was perplexing the snip of the Opera-house with 'diwectionth for his Petwaach dweth,' and Louisa Erskyne had manœuvred herself into the part rejected by Frederica; to enhance which, Lord Putney promised to enact her lion, provided she could persuade Traveller Broughley to assist him with his roar.

Within a week after this elaborate festival, Lord Launceston, having sauntered one morning into Frederica's drawing-room, to inquire at what hour he was to accompany Lady Sophia and herself in their daily ride, had the satisfaction to find Sir Brooke lounging over the Quarterly Review, as contentedly as he had ever done at Rawleighford, and to discover that he had actually roken an engagement with Mr. Laxley, to enjoy the society of his rederica.

"I want to engage you in my service," said the latter, as Sir Brooke hurried away to his toilet, to prepare for the execution of this neglected duty. "We cannot make up our Pirate group for Calder House, without your assistance."

"I am sorry for that, for I have not the least thought of going."

"But my dear William you promised from the first to be of our party."

"Did I?—Then I did not know what I was talking of; or perhaps pleaded the invitation, to escape a tea-party at old grandmother Derenzy's, or a little commission to step down to Broad-stairs to hire a lodgings for Lady Olivia."

"No, you promised to go, simply to oblige your sister; and I positively will not let you off unless you have some real, right-down, positive engagement with Miss Waddlestone, to interfere with my claims."

"Real, right-down, positive engagement with Miss Leonora?" reiterated Lord Launceston. "It seems to me that my destiny decrees me to be engaged, on all occasions, to the whole world; and always in my own despite. Seriously, Fred., you must excuse my attendance at Calder House. I am so miserably out of spirits just now, that I am not prepared to carry an extra load of absurdity. I can play no part but that of a repining, irresolute, and unhappy man."

"I trust, dearest Launceston," said Frederica, affectionately, "that your affairs—"

"Are not, just now, my bitterest grievance, though in a most dilapidated condition. No! I have resolved to let Marston, since the fates forbid my deliverance by selling it; to go abroad, retrench, grow mad and desperate; and either calcine myself, geologizing in the crater of Vesuvius; or go to sleep in a snow-drift, on the Grand Mulet. I am tired of this life of imposture and monotony; and will leave *you*, dearest, to inherit my estates, pay off my mortgages, and make my apologies to Lady Mary Trevelyan."

"I rejoice to perceive that you are not *quite* in earnest; that like other young gentlemen in debt and in love, you are only a little hypochondriacal this morning."

"It is a very provoking thing," cried Lord Launceston, growing half angry, "that I never can persuade anyone I am in earnest. There have I been, sitting these two hours with my mother, threatening to take a dose of prussic acid without consulting Camomile, unless she afforded me a certain piece of intelligence which I demanded at her hands: and she actually sat listening to me, smiling over her chocolate as if I had menaced myself with a cup of water-gruel!"

"Which intelligence was doubtless the residence of Miss Elbany's family, or the place of her retreat. It does not require a wizard to detect the motive of your despondency."

"Will *you* be more merciful, Frederica, and let me into the secret? Rawleigh may have afforded you intelligence on the subject?"

"What interest or information can he possibly possess concerning an advertising 'Companion to a lady of quality'?—Depend on it my husband knows and cares as little about the young lady as I do."

"You never were more mistaken. He was constantly closeted with her in Charles-street; and I have every reason to believe they had a long interview, on the morning of her departure."

"Indeed!" said Frederica, reddening with momentary emotion. "But why not make inquiries of Wrightson, who accompanied Miss Lucy in her expedition?"

"I have. But as I could neither offer a bribe to a worthy woman who was present at my birth, nor cudgel her for giving me false information, where was the use of my inquiries?"

"Poor good old Wrightson is incapable of misleading any one."

"I found her very capable of misleading *me*. From a sly glance of the old traitress's eye under her spectacles, I suspected, indeed, that she was will-of-the-wisping me with her story of 'the pleasant little village of Wansfield, near Lewes; and Miss's uncle being curate; and Miss being sent for to meet an old aunt from Madeira!' Yet I was idiot enough to set off in the mail, and waste three days in hunting out this Utopian 'pleasant little village of Wansfield' throughout the county of Sussex! From Lewes they passed me like a parish vagrant to Winfield; from Battle to Wentsfield; from Horsham to Walfield. In short, I was obliged to confess my defeat on every *field* in Wessex."

"Poor fellow!—I should like to have been present when you upbraided your Charles-street enemies on your return."

"No—though I acknowledge myself to *you* as a conquered knight, my pride preserved me from the spectacle of their triumph. My mother has no idea of my wild-goose expedition; nor that I am more interested in Miss Elbany's exits and entrances than in those of Chloe."

"And why imagine Rawleigh to be less indifferent?" hesitated Frederica.

"I have already given you reasons sufficient to satisfy a rational being; in addition to which, I shall only observe that on the day of Lucy's journey (*you* were at Ash Bank, and *I* was executing commissions for Lady Sophia Lee), Sir Brooke passed the whole

morning condoling with our respectable parent. When I broke in upon them, they were engaged in a discussion which had actually brought tears into the eyes of both."

Lady Rawleigh blushed when the possibility occurred to her mind that this family argument might have turned upon the levity, or seeming levity, of a wife and daughter dear to them both; and to escape the little flying twinges of conscience which, like those of the gout, are useless unless concentrated into a decided fit, she returned to the subject of the masque.

"Then you are absolutely determined," said she, "to absent yourself from Lord Calder's *fête*?"

"My dear sister, you know how I have always hated buffooneries of that description. I was never intended for a London man. I like a dinner-party or a circle of friends, or a country-house filled with a well-assorted party. But as to the glaring ball-rooms where you flock in mobs to show your finery, and live in terror of the sneers of your acquaintance, I cannot describe the ludicrous and vexatious associations they produce in my mind. I have never found myself in possession of sufficient industry or sufficient idleness—(and both are required for the pursuit)—to form friendships among the motley tribes of fashionable life. I have looked round me sometimes, in these grand crowds, without being able to discover a single person appearing in a natural character, or acting without some latent motive."

"Now you overcharge your picture I am satisfied. None but a weak cause requires the aid of caricature. Granting, however, that your arguments possess some general truth, why concentrate them against this one unlucky party?"

"And in what assumed costume does your ladyship intend to appear?" said Lord Launceston, perceiving from Frederica's earnestness that she was really desirous of his company.

"I have some thoughts of making up a group from the *Pirate*, provided I can persuade Lady Sophia to lend her flaxen hair and azure eyes to the part of Brenda. Hers is the true Saxon order of beauty."

"Why not make her Rowena, at once; and exhibit your own jetty curls as Rebecca? In which case I will be Isaac the Jew, at your bidding."

"Rawleigh has not a sufficiently chivalrous air for Ivanhoe; and the Hebrew maiden is represented as a paragon of loveliness. Minna Troil claims no such superiority; and while Lady Sophia and myself profit by the opportunity to economize our costume in the simplicity of a few ells of Tartan, Sir Brooke would make a very respectable Mordaunt Merton; and you, Launceston, with your dishevelled curls, an admirable representative of the dauntless Cleveland."

" Thus spake the rover
 To his gallant crew,
 Up with the black flag,
 Down with the blue !"

cried Launceston, after a rapid discomposure of his raven locks. Then, sinking back on the sofa, and resuming his former listless tone, he observed,—“ No,—I am not up to the thing.”

“ ‘The thing’ requires no such trouble as you anticipate. I shall not even attempt to add the pleasantries of ‘glorious John’ to our group, or the terrors of Norna.”

“ All you mean to do, in short,” said her brother, provokingly, “ is to honour Calder House with a somewhat uglier gown than usual; while Lady Sophia as the lint-white Brenda—

Seems by her dusky guide, like morning led by night.”

“ Just so!—and as you decline affording us the sanction of your countenance, I suppose I must accept Lord Calder’s offer of his nephew, Mr. Rockingham, to complete our group in the character of the Pirate.”

“ What an odious thing to be dependent on a rich and arbitrary uncle!” cried Lord Launceston. “ Calder positively talks of lending you that poor boy, as if he were an opera-ticket, or a volume of a new novel!”

“ I wish he were anything half so amusing! However, he is remarkably good looking, and will show well as a Buccaneer.”

“ Well, well!” said Launceston, rising from his seat as his brother-in-law entered, whom he had promised to accompany as far as Westminster, “ if you can prevail on the majestic Lady Sophia to subside into the daughter of Magnus Troil, I am, at all risks, for your foolery.”

Glad to have accomplished her purpose, Frederica wished him good-bye with the intention of profiting by his absence, to try the effect of her eloquence on Lady Sophia. The last words she heard addressed by her husband to Lord Launceston, as they quitted the room together were, “ Can you recommend me a good footman? Frederica’s man (that tall, active-looking fellow Thomas, whom you used to patronize at Rawleighford), is off at a moment’s warning, and leaves me in a most uncomfortable plight. The man’s mother is dying; and one could not detain him, under such circumstances.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

Quoth she, "for many years he drove
A kind of broking trade in love."

HUDIBRAS.

LADY RAWLEIGH's errand with her friend, prospered worse and better than she expected. On her arrival at General Lee's new residence in Curzon-street, she found Lady Derenzy in the last clause of a prolonged morning visit; and had the satisfaction of finding herself greeted by that stately dame with flattering cordiality. Her ladyship was one of those persons so difficult to deal with, who leave you in a fever of tenderness one day; and meet you again, on the next, below freezing point of ungraciousness; who favour you with a note of invitation full of earnestness and warmth, and receive you as formally as if you were a poor relation. In the present instance, her ladyship's augmented regard for the wife of her nephew, arose from having heard her intimacy with the Calder and Rochester set very maliciously blamed by Miss Harcourt, Lady Lavinia Lisle, and several ancient spinsters of her own circle.

On Frederica's marriage, Lady Derenzy had calculated that her influence would extricate Sir Brooke from his humdrum habits and undistinguished position in society, and initiate him into the vortex of the great world; and she was proportionately disappointed on recognising Lady Rawleigh's taste for domestic life, and discovering the humiliating relationship into which she was about to be forced, by the indiscretion of her brother. But on learning that the *fête* at Calder House was supposed to be given in her honour, Sophronia was ready to forgive all her delinquencies.

"I am glad to leave Sophia in your hands, my dear Lady Rawleigh," said she, as she rose to take leave; "for I trust your influence will induce her to coincide with General Lee's desire that she should make a brilliant appearance at the entertainment at Calder House."

"Let me trust so too," said Frederica as she closed the door, hastening to seat herself beside her friend. "I am come for that very purpose."

"*Et tu Brute?* I had some hopes of enlisting you on my side. Now pray, do not suppose, dear Lady Rawleigh, that, like a whimsical woman of fashion, I am courting your persuasion to do the thing I like. I am quite sincere in my reluctance."

"But why? you have told me that you detest Lady Rochester,—but nothing wherefore; and that you cherish an equal abhorrence

of Lord Calder ; and I own I am curious to know the origin of your prejudice against so very agreeable a person."

" Were I to explain its motives I should be tempted into a long tiresome story ; valuable as the advertisements say, to no person but the owner."

" Valuable to *me*, if you will intrust it to my keeping.—Come ! I will wind off this skein of netting silk, while you are consulting the recesses of your memory."

" You fool me to the top of my bent !" replied Lady Sophia, faintly laughing. " What children we are, that a word, a look, or a ludicrous association, can make us jest upon the heaviest tragedies of life !—Here am I—on the point of recounting with a smile, facts which have wrung the bitterest tears from my eyes."

" Nay ! now you excite my interest, rather than my curiosity."

" And I will disappoint neither the one nor the other. I may, however, at least spare you such facts as,

My name's Sophia!—at the Austrian court
My sire despatches scrawled.

I dare say my cousin Brooke has profited by some long winter evening to acquaint you that I was Lord Offaley's only daughter, that I lost my mother in my cradle,—became a peevish self-willed child,—and grew up to be a torment to myself and all belonging to me."

" By no means ; he only acquainted me with a childish feud that existed between you."

" I am four years older than your husband ; and at sixteen, was already bewildered in a maze of fine sentiment, while he,—at twelve,—had not a notion beyond taws and trap-ball. My father, aware of his insufficiency to direct my education and control my impetuous character, turned me over to his beloved sister, Sophronia ; and assuredly no preceptor of her sex could be better endowed for the act of taming down an unquiet spirit. Lady Derenzy could have broken in Mazeppa's fiery courser, by mere word of mouth."

" But what effect had the exercise of her skill upon Lady Sophia Rhyse ?"

" More than might have been expected. Her tyranny amused me. I have always been a sort of amateur in waywardness ; and, accustomed from my childhood to indulge in the wilful vagaries of a spoiled child, it was something new and diverting to cope with a will that resembled my own. But it is not my intention to favour you with reminiscences of my white-frock days. I will convey you straight to the happy moment, when, at the buoyant, sanguine, joyous age of seventeen, I was summoned to preside over my father's household, and to enter the lists of fashionable life."

"A charming epoch."

"It might have appeared so to many a girl of a far more staid and philosophical temperament; for my new position afforded every attraction that could embellish existence. Lord Offaley had recently been appointed Envoy to the Court of Tuscany; and the Continent, so long closed against the restless wanderings of our countrymen, had not lost its charm of nationality. Napoleon was scarcely yet settled at Elba,—the world had not forgotten the iron-terrors of his despotism,—and the English were still regarded as liberators. I found Florence, not what it is to-day, a sort of diletante watering-place, frequented by second-rate English people, but a genuine Italian city; invested with a spell of romance which I should find it difficult to define, and which has long since been patent-axe-tree'd."

"Which means that you were young, lovely, and sentimental, and his Excellency the Earl of Offaley's only daughter. Like Elizabeth of old, whichever way you turned, people probably fell on their knees."

"True,—almost to the letter! My ladyship's Saxon fairness excited wonderful enthusiasm among the dark-haired sons and daughters of a more glowing clime; and my ladyship's head became somewhat dizzy from such an exuberance of incense. But there is one word of your arraignment, Frederica, that grates on my ear,—'sentimental!'—Why do we never allow ourselves to allude to the natural impulses of the heart, unless in a tone of mockery?—What is there to deride in the sensibility of boy and girlhood?—Youth is as inevitably connected with such emotions, as spring with flowers; though we might despise the *man*—the full-grown—full-minded—dry—hard—rational—debating—legislating—calculating man, who preferred a trumpery violet to an oak tree capable of being sold at so much per foot,—surely we may allow a moment—(the world will take care that it does not last too long)—for the indulgence of natural feelings, and the unchecked illusions of the soul?"

"You are the last person in the world," cried Lady Rawleigh, "from whom I should have expected a tirade in praise of sensibility."

"Because the world, I thank it, has clad me in complete steel against any relapse of the disorder. Besides, it is a distemper of extreme youth, and would as ill become me, now, as the chincough. I only wish to forewarn you that I entered life unguarded by any precocious philosophy; and I was just as well inclined to believe that 'words were things,' that those who spoke me fairly meant me kindly, that there was warmth in the sunshine and safety on the wave, as any other young lady of my age. Though neither qu'

a fool nor quite an ignoramus; my studies at Twickenham had been wholly literary. I knew nothing of the world, and fancied I knew wonders. In short, my dear Frederica, I was as promising a subject for a dupe, as Moses Primrose or Wilhelm Meister."

"But surely you were not left wholly to your own guidance?"

"Not precisely.—There was a Mrs. Mansel, a sort of demi-semi dame de compagnie, the widow of an officer, who, at my father's desire, had accompanied me from England; and who, by Lady Derenzy's discernment, had been selected for the office; so qualified as to prevent her from becoming a dangerous companion—not to me—but to my father. Yet Lord Offaley, as you have probably heard, was a man of highly cultivated mind, absorbed by his public duties and abstruse studies, who was very unlikely to have fallen in love with anything less ethereal than Carlo Dolce's representation of La Poesia; and who did not even apply his observation to sublunary things sufficiently to perceive that his daughter was desperately in love, or that Mrs. Mansel was looking on with as vague and incurious an eye as if she had been only a painted representation of a duenna!"

"In love!" reiterated Frederica. "The romance of your history began betimes."

"So it should ever do, that it may end before the commencement of the matter-of-fact business of life. But guess, Frederica,—and save me the labour of an attempt at a blush—guess the name of its hero; one of your most intimate acquaintance."

"Lord Calder!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, her eyes sparkling with triumph at her ready detection of the mystery.

"Not quite, but nearly."

"Not that odious, hypocritical Mr. Vaux?" again interrupted Frederica.

"Not the hypocritical Mr. Vaux, certainly, but his precursor; the boy that was father to the man. A stripling of five-and-twenty and a polished man of the world at forty-and-one, are two very different beings."

"Not in every instance, I trust," observed Frederica, in a low tone. "I should grieve to think that, sixteen years hence, Rawleigh would become so strangely altered."

"Brooke Rawleigh at forty—fifty—a hundred-and-one if you please, will always remain the same excellent straight-forward personage he is to-day; but he runs no danger of becoming a man of the world! When Mr. Vaux visited Florence, he had just left Oxford, where he had distinguished himself sufficiently to render his name known to my father; and was proceeding on the grand tour under the combined advantages of a good person, good abilities,

good fortune, and good introductions. But the charms he soon discovered in Florence induced him to anchor himself there for the remainder of the winter. To my father, indeed, he was a great acquisition. Our secretary was a piece of diplomatic mechanism wound up to go through its accustomed duties without demur or delay, or an idea of its own ; and our attachés were a tribe of schoolboy honourables, who fortunately made their way too well in Italian households, to inflict their nothingness upon ours. Mr. Vaux, on the other hand, was unexceptionable in his address, a young man of cultivated mind and manners; graceful, insinuating, and though courted in the best society, always to be found at the embassy."

"Or (to speak it without affectation) always at the feet of Lady Sophia Rhyse."

"Like other anticipators, you overshoot the mark. He was *not* at my feet, and was cautious not to place himself there. But he was constantly at my side, and had every excuse for the propinquity; being incessantly invited by my father, and welcomed by myself. Mrs. Mansel was my constant companion; but her presence, whether ghostly or bodily, formed no restraint on our intercourse. In our box at the Opera she sat with her glassy eyes riveted on the 104th representation of the Tancredi, with the same vague immobility it had elicited on its first night; and in our walks and drives I could not perceive that she saw or heard more of our proceedings than the idle wind that passed us by. Meanwhile, those proceedings were fraught with peril to one at least of the party. Frederick Vaux and I were sharing together that bewildering dream of first attachment, which leaves the remainder of life a blank. Without distinctly uttering the words 'I love,' there was nothing *but* love in all our arguments; our meetings and partings,—our disagreements and reconciliations—our thoughts and looks."

"And what, then, prevented the utterance of that 'open Sesame' of the heart, which should have consecrated such looks and thoughts?"

"At that period I never paused to inquire. I knew that in English wooings, marriage is preceded by courtship—courtship by a certain probation of love. In Vaux's absence, I thought only of the moment of meeting him again; and when he *was* again by my side, knew and felt nothing but that I was the happiest creature in the world."

Lady Sophia paused for a moment, as if absorbed by her own recollections; but on perceiving an air of sympathy in Lady Rawleigh's countenance, suddenly resumed her natural spirit.

"Well, Frederica, not to waste too much bathos on a sterile subject, this same delightful winter passed rapidly away. My fath-

upheld the dignity of the embassy by a series of princely entertainments, at which Vaux was considered less a guest than a child of the house ; and though I experienced the contrariety of opening our weekly ball with some man of higher distinction, I was sure to find him at the breakfast-table the following morning, discussing Greek epigrams with Lord Offaley till poor Mansel's eyes expanded beyond the dimensions of the teacups over which she was presiding. Yet the winter expired, without any better understanding among us. Instead of departing for Rome and Naples, as he had originally projected, Mr. Vaux satisfied himself with a six weeks' visit to the baths at Lucca, during which period a miserable vacuum was perceptible to the mind of his excellency, and the heart of his excellency's daughter ; and when, on his return, he was invited to pass the autumn at our delicious casino, I know not which appeared the happiest of the three. I will spare you, however, the twilight and the moonlight, the Arno, the orange-blossoms, the vintage, and all the poetry of the case ; and acknowledge that when we settled once more at Florence for the winter months, even *I* had begun to think it strange that Mr. Vaux was not yet my declared lover."

"Perhaps his circumstances—"

"Exactly so !—I had somehow or other discovered that his estate amounted to no more than fifteen hundred a-year ; and my father's, I knew, was estimated at as many thousands. In my ignorance of the world, I settled it with myself that Vaux had not courage to tender so poor a pittance to the heiress of Lord Offaley ; and from that moment, my pride repressed the professions of disinterestedness I had been accustomed to utter in his presence. Every declaration of humility appeared like meeting his scruples half way. Sometimes, indeed, he seemed on the point of overcoming them without any such encouragement ; when just as my hour of happiness was approaching, the fates decreed that a Lord Ellersby and a Mr. Dynley should make their entrance on the scene."

"The present Lord Lawford, and Lady Barbara's husband?"

"Precisely !—Lord Ellersby was a good-natured fashionable young man, who travelled to get rid of himself and his time, and thought both one and the other as well bestowed on the ambassador's daughter as on the Venus of the Tribune. While Mr. Dynley, as a species of gentlemanly toady, fancied he escaped the charge of hanging on and tuft-hunting, because he concealed his meanness under a braggadocio air, and had courage to say insolent things to the man whose table and carriage he laid under contribution. He was, in fact, the same cynical, overbearing, supercilious person you see him now. But unfortunately he was also Vaux's Oxford and ^{ton} chum ; and from the first day of his appearance at the em-

bassy, I conceived an insurmountable prejudice against him. Vaux, in our *villeggiatura*, had taught me German; in return for which I bestowed the name of Mephistopheles on his bosom friend; which piece of flippancy he communicated to Dynley, and our dislike became reciprocal. Had Rawleigh a Pylades, Frederica? If so, you are probably aware of the danger of making an enemy of one's lever's bosom friend."

"Mrs. Martha Derenzy was Sir Brooke's Pylades," said her companion; "and we began, and have continued a system of mutual regard."

"And yet, with all his courteous hatred of me, Mr. Dynley could not prevent Lord Ellersby from—But hark!—I hear General Lee's step in the other room. You must suspend your curiosity till to-morrow."

"We are engaged to ride together at five; why not favour me with the remainder of your 'Life and Times' during our ride?"

"On no account! I do not like your brother well enough to improve his young mind at my expense. But if you will let me off the riding party, for which I am not quite in spirits, I will call for you this evening when the general goes to his club. I have the Duke of Draxfield's box for Drury-lane; where we will finish our gossip in a *tête-à-tête*."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Heaven, when it strives to polish all it can
Its last best work, but forms a softer man;
Picks from each sex to make the favourite blest;
Your love of pleasure, our desire of rest;
Blends, in exception to all general rules,
Your taste for follies with our scorn of fools;
Reserve with frankness, art with truth allied,—
Courage with softness, modesty with pride,
Fixed principles with fancy ever new.

POPE.

"I HAVE been quite tired out this morning by Lexley," observed Sir Brooke, as he pledged Frederica in a glass of sherry soon after the commencement of dinner. "He is such an unmerciful magnifier of atoms, such an umpire of the frogs and mice, such a monsterer of nothings—that at last one loses one's patience. I shall skip the house to-night, and pass a quiet evening with you in Charles-street."

"You offer me a strong temptation to break my engagements," replied his wife, reddening to the temples. "But I have promised to accompany Lady Sophia to the play. She is to call for me about

eight. "Perhaps," continued Frederica, with a conscious look, for she really wished to enjoy the conversation of her friend; "perhaps you would like to accompany us? She has the Duke of Draxfield's box."

Vexed to find his little domestic project thus impeded, Sir Brooke took it into his head to be affronted.

"I am obliged to you," he replied, somewhat drily. "But I should think that General Lee, Lady Sophia, and yourself, like John Gilpin's family, 'would fill the chaise.'"

"But you could find your way to us," said Lady Rawleigh.

"No!—I will go to the Alfred. I am a week in arrear with the newspapers; and from Albemarle-street, can look in for the close of the debate, and save my character."

"As you please. There is nothing very promising at Drury-lane; and you might have been bored."

"Who have you of your party?" inquired Sir Brooke, carelessly helping himself to a cutlet, though his plate was already supplied.

"Not a soul! Lady Sophia and I have agreed to be alone, that we may decide upon our dresses for Calder House."

Sir Brooke now appeared more at ease, and despatched his double portion of cutlets without much effort. Before dessert was placed on the table, Lady Sophia was announced to be in waiting; and Frederica in her simple morning dress, was immediately handed to the carriage by her husband. After depositing General Lee at his club, they proceeded to the theatre; and were no sooner comfortably installed in their arm-chair, than Lady Rawleigh claimed the promise of her friend to complete her narrative.

"Shall I go on?" as Yorick says. Do you know that the routine of dinner and dressing have reduced me to so sober a mood, that I am positively ashamed of my own egotism. But in much love, and much perplexity, if I recollect."

"You had brought Mr. Dynley and Lord Ellersby to Florence; and given me reason to prognosticate an adorer in the one and enemy in the other."

"You were not half so nearly asleep this morning as I conjectured."

"Nor *you* so much in earnest; for I believed your attachment to Mr. Vaux a serious affair. Yet you now allude to it with levity."

"Do I?" said Lady Sophia, with an irrepressible shudder. "Then my words belie my feelings. For during ten long desolate years that man and his treachery preyed upon my heart! I cannot tell you, Frederica, with what surprise, what bewilderment, what gradually-awakening anguish, I perceived how pointedly he withdrew his attentions to make way for those of Lord Ellersby; and,

how plainly he evinced his desire that I should become the wife of another. I had no advisers. Mrs. Mansel was a goose. My father would probably have followed up my confidences by offering to countersign Mr. Vaux's passport for the pursuance of his southern tour; and from the midst of my perplexities arose a foolish impulse of coquetry to quicken the pulse of Vaux's diminished passion by a little jealousy. Having satisfied my conscience that Lord Ellersby possessed about as much sensibility as an oyster, and that he devoted his homage to me only because I happened to be the finest lady in Florence, I commenced a violent flirtation with him; promoting him to all the distinctions of companionship in riding, dancing, singing, and conversing, which I had formerly bestowed on Frederick Vaux; I gained nothing by my folly. Lord Lawford is your country neighbour; so that you can appreciate his merits as a partner and a companion; and Frederick, instead of being excited to any thing like jealous rivalry, retreated further and further from the competition. Nor was this the worst. Poor Lord Ellersby, deceived by the encouragement of my smiles, hastened with his proposals to my father; and one fine morning when I went to offer my dutiful salutations to Lord Offaley, he congratulated me on having secured so respectable and brilliant a position as that of Countess of Lawford; even while an air of vexation clouded his brow at the prospect of consigning his darling child to the arms of a blockhead!"

"He did not revert to the possibility of rejection?"

"How should he? He had seen me welcome with the utmost courtesy those attentions which I now assured him were revolting to me: had seen me court the declaration I was now half inclined to resent as an insult."

"And of course reproached you with your hypocrisy?"

"My dear father could see or imagine no fault in *his* daughter. Having listened with patience to my request that he would decline the overtures of my unfortunate dupe, he replied—'Since you absolutely refuse an offer that would have secured your future independence, I think it right, my dear child, to apprise you that my brother necessarily inherits, with my title, my entailed estates; —that my expenses through life have unfortunately equalled my income; and that, unless a prolongation of my appointment here should enable me to appropriate a fund to your future benefit, your mother's fortune of ten thousand pounds is all I shall be able to bequeath you. Let not, however, this limited portion influence your views in the choice of an alliance. Should I die to-morrow, my sister Derenzy has solemnly engaged to afford you the protection of a comfortable home.'"

"Such, then, after all, was the paltry motive of Mr. Vaux's reserve!"

"Judge what tears of bitterness my enlightenment on such a point must have wrung from my heart! I grieve to recall to mind that my sudden burst of sorrow was attributed by my poor father to displeasure at his thoughtless improvidence, rather than to a painful sense of my own humiliation. But my simple assurances sufficed to remove his unpleasant impression; for persons of a generous mind are always susceptible of a generous interpretation of the views of others. While leaving the room to conceal in solitude my wounded feelings, he abruptly recalled me. 'One more word on this unsatisfactory subject, Sophia,' said he. 'I trust I have no reason for apprehending that any other attachment,—that your intimacy with Mr. Vaux, in short, has influenced your determination against Lord Ellersby?'

"'My dear father,' I replied, evasively and with a beating heart, "surely you must have noticed that of all the young men who frequent the embassy, no one pays me less attention; and that his attraction to this house lies exclusively in your society and conversation?"

"So I have always thought; or I should have been more cautious in my invitations," said Lord Offaley, resuming his official pen. "Mr. Vaux is a young man of great abilities; and may, if he chooses, win his way to some distinction. But Vaux is one of the last men in the world to whom I would confide the happiness of a beloved child." Frederica! what do I deserve for having trifled with the credulity of so good—so kind a father?"

"Alas! within a few months, I had lost him for ever. I was left to the moderate inheritance he had announced. Horatio Rhyse's father, an Irish squire encumbered with debts and children, became Earl of Offaley; and myself, a repining inmate of that odious mansion at Twickenham."

"Do not distress yourself by entering further into those details," said Frederica soothingly, on perceiving that her companion was painfully agitated.

"I have nearly concluded—one more plunge, and the worst will be over. Lady Derenzy was already a widow when I returned to her roof; and I soon found reason to acknowledge how much I had been formerly obliged to her meek lord's participation in her restless despotism, and to the influence of my father's importance upon her mind. She was now more frivolous and vexatious than ever; lived in a ferment of finesse for my matrimonial advancement; and passed her days in deplored my rejection of the Earldom of Lawford and Elvington Park, or in devising further schemes of hymeneal speculation. I promise you, Frederica, that the dragons, bonzes, and other monsters assembled in the Twickenham china

gallery, are lovely in comparison with the collection of human horrors tendered by Lady Derenzy to my choice."

"And Mr. Vaux?" hesitated Lady Rawleigh.

"Having accurately investigated the state of my father's affairs; and ascertained that common rumour had rightly prognosticated the limited extent of my inheritance, he dismissed the whole family from his mind. When next I saw this former object of my idolatry (it was not till five years after I became an orphan), Mr. Vaux was enacting the part of double to Lord Calder, and of lover to Lord Calder's sister! Time and my arbitrary aunt had somewhat tamed down my susceptibility; and I met him with all the indifference I had formerly attempted to assume. I doubt whether he were conscious of the change, or even of my existence—a mere Lady Sophia, with ten thousand pounds, was to him as unimportant as the chair on which she was seated."

"And General Lee?" said Frederica.

"From the moment of my arrival in England, he attached himself to Lady Derenzy's society, watched over my happiness, soothed my petty mortifications; and only waited to ascertain that my paltry provision had diminished the ardour of my former admirers, to offer me his hand. He had been my father's dearest and most confidential friend; from that day he became the dearest and most confidential friend of my father's daughter. We have lived happily together, without a cloud—without a care; and satisfied all Lady Derenzy's apprehensions of having to endure the company of her indigent niece as a perpetual burthen, by his endowing me with settlements to the utmost amount an entailed property would admit."

"But I do not understand," said Frederica, "by what co-operation in Vaux's meanness Lord Calder and his sister became so abhorrent to your feelings?"

"The story is sufficiently humiliating, but must be told, like the rest. During my unlimited trust in Mr. Vaux, when we were all but betrothed lovers, I had exchanged a thousand trifling gifts with him. I gave him books, antiques, and even the most unadvised pledge of a woman's tenderness—a ring bearing my initials and a lock of hair. I will not recur to the protestations of good faith and gratitude with which it was originally received. But you will believe that when I beheld it ostentatiously displayed on the finger of Lady Rochester, I grew indignant, more especially on discovering that every idle particular of the affection entertained by Lady Sophia Rhyse for a man who had never exhibited towards her more than the courtesies of an ordinary acquaintance, had not only been accounted for her diversion, but that she amused herself by repea

ing the scandalous tale in all companies, with the most wicked exaggerations."

"Shameful to both parties; but in Lady Rochester, unfemininely false to the cause of her sex."

"To Lord Calder's infamous advice and example, on the other hand," continued Lady Sophia, "I was indebted for a still deeper injury on the part of my former idol. A few years after my marriage, an accidental encounter with Frederic Vaux in the intimacy of a country house, enabled him to insult me by a declaration of attachment; and an assurance that, the motives of my union with General Lee being universally detected, I could not do better than profit by the liberty I had acquired, than by bestowing my heart according to its original suggestions."

"What insolence! What presumption!"

"At once alarmed and disgusted by his audacity, I persuaded General Lee that my health required a residence abroad; and no sooner had we reached Italy, than the vexations I had recently endured, and my consciousness of the calumnies of which I had been the object, conspired to throw me into a most precarious state of health. It was then, Frederica, I first became acquainted with the amiable character of Mary Trevelyan. I believe I acquired some interest in her eyes by being able to talk to her of Launceston and yourself; while Lady Mary, from the analogy existing between my former position and her own, was to me as a memorial of my early dangers and troubles. During my long and tedious illness, your cousin devoted herself to me with all the patience of a sister; and I had ample leisure to become aware of her excellence."

"But surely the kindness of General Lee rendered you independent of her attentions? In him, you had an unfailing friend and companion!"

"I have promised you my entire confidence," replied Lady Sophia, while her lips quivered with rising emotion, and tears glistened in her eyes, "or I should find it difficult to confess the full extent of my weakness. Frederica! when a woman tells you that she is satisfied to feel esteem and friendship for her husband, mistrust either her candour or her disposition. It is written that Love shall be the bond of wedlock; and nature, indignant to find her laws rendered subservient to the mercenary interests of life takes a signal vengeance on the offender. Till my marriage, regarded the General with the dutiful affection of a daughter. But this sentiment was incompatible with our new position. We existed and exist in a false position. I cannot lose in his present the humiliating consciousness of obligation, nor can he assume the familiarity of wedded life which, if tender, he fears would sit u

gracefully on his grey hairs; if stern, appear an assumption of authority; and wherever restraint exists between married people—”

The sentence was arrested on her lips. The door of the box was turned on its noiseless hinges, and the attendant demanded for Lord Calder an admittance which, however unwelcome, could scarcely be refused.

“I have been waiting nearly an hour,” said his lordship, as he accepted a seat between Frederica and her friend, “to acquire courage for this intrusion. From Lady Whitehaven’s opposite box, my glass enabled me to discover you engaged in some profoundly interesting discussion.”

“Did you not naturally suspect,” said Lady Sophia, “that we were talking of your ball; and passing in review all possible costumes and characters.”

“And what is the result of so long a debate?” inquired his lordship;

“That Lady Sophia accepts the part of Brenda Troil; while I am to figure as Minna,” said Frederica, looking significantly at her friend, whom she thus entrapped into acquiescence in her plans.

“My brother and Sir Brooke will complete our group.”

“You have induced them, then, to join the party, against which, I understand, they have from the first protested? But no wonder! It was not likely that any desire of yours should be long ungratified:—

She that can *please* is certain to persuade—
To-day is loved—to-morrow is obeyed.”

But scarcely had the last tones of his rhapsody melted in her ears, while her face was still covered with blushes, arising from the significance of his compliment, the box door was again opened: and, somewhat to the surprise of all parties, the honourable member for Martwick suddenly made his appearance. But of the four, Sir Brooke was considerably the *most* surprised. His wife had tranquillized his mind by announcing that she was about to pass a solitary evening with a female friend; and he found her listening, with visible traces of sensibility, to the tender declamations of an accomplished libertine. Appearances were strangely against her.

Lady Sophia, meanwhile, unaware of anything peculiar in the position of the parties, and satisfied of Frederica’s attachment to her husband, concluded that Rawleigh’s arrival was extremely acceptable to her friend. “I congratulate myself, my dear Sir Brooke,” said she, “that you have thus opportunely made your appearance among us. There is a petition I am dying to make to Lord Calder; and I have no chance of obtaining his attention ~~as long as Frederica’s~~ as Frederica’s is disengaged. For goodness sake, theref-

sit down, and make yourself as agreeable to Lady Rawleigh as ever you did to Miss Rawdon, that my request may be framed and granted without reaching her ears."

There was no possibility of refusing the seat to which, by a motion of Lady Sophia's hand, he was thus invited, though he entertained a suspicion that it had been recently vacated by Lord Calder; and Frederica was obliged to enter into conversation with a man who appeared quite as cross as if he had been encountering a second dinner with his Argyll-street cousin, or a sixth with his Martwich constituents.

But between the many pauses of their dialogue, it was impossible not to overhear what was passing between Lady Sophia and Lord Calder.

"I want your permission to bring a young friend of mine to your fête," was Lady Sophia's opening phrase. But this is not all. I not only ask your permission to introduce a stranger; but that you trust implicitly to me for her right and title to such an honour."

"You afford me a most unexpected proof of kindness in an opportunity of obliging you," replied Calder; who was far more anxious to listen to the greeting between Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh, than to the name of her ladyship's protégée. "You shall receive a blank card to-morrow."

"To satisfy your apprehensions on one point," she resumed, "be assured that my demand has no connexion with the untuneable name so distasteful to your ears and those of my aunt Derenzy."

"If you allude to Miss Waddlestone," observed Lord Calder, with an air of candour, "the Princesse de Guéménée has undertaken to bring her to my ball; and I am so far from wishing to disown the acquaintance of a man whom, as Lord Vardington, I pronounced to be one of the most intelligent and gentlemanly with whom I ever conversed, that I made it a point to leave with her father my name and an invitation. But Mr. Waddlestone, in a spirit to which I render justice and honour, has declined it. I am happy to say that *his* is at present the only negative I have received."

As the details of a meeting broken "by most admired disorder," whether in an election committee or the private box of a patent theatre, are far from amusing, either in fact or recapitulation, it will be more satisfactory to turn from Sir Brooke Rawleigh's discontents and Frederica's anxieties, to an explanation of the position and disposition of Mr. Waddlestone, of Waddlestone-house—a person deserving higher respect than to be introduced solely as an object of mystification.

He might have been regarded with greater interest some nine-

teen years previous to his appearance in our story ; for, at twenty-one, unencumbered with a vulgar name and a splendid fortune, he might have been cited as exhibiting a rare union of personal and mental endowments. An accidental encounter with the heiress of one of the wealthiest aldermen of the city of London, transformed him from a well-connected young barrister, with his way to make in the world, into an independent man, condemned to association with persons of unpolished habits and uncultivated minds. The gay and handsome Edward Meredyth had not hesitated to accept the seemingly brilliant destiny opened to him by the partiality of Miss Waddlestone ; and within a few weeks from their first introduction at Weymouth, his name and fate were changed. But long before the termination of the honeymoon, he began to doubt whether his career of professional exertion might not have been preferable to the golden independence shared with a companion so devoid of delicacy or intellectuality, as the partner whom he had chosen—or rather, who had chosen him.

For some time, he indulged in hopes that cultivation and intercourse with the world would soften down the glaring vulgarity of Mrs. W.'s mind and manners. But these gradually subsided ; and had it not been for the beauty and promising disposition of the little girl who was the pledge of this inauspicious union, the treasures of opulence would have been insufficient to render life endurable. Even here, however, disappointments awaited him, such as form, and ought to form, the retribution of mercenary alliances. He was apprehensive that Leonora would contract something of Mrs. W.'s coarseness of feeling and demeanour ; and had too strong a respect for the claims of a woman whose moral conduct was irreproachable, and who was the sole artificer of his fortunes, to interpose the slightest barrier between the tenderness of a mother and her child. Fortunately, the parents of the heiress had not exhibited the tenacious longevity peculiar to persons worth large property and expectant heirs ; and his mortified feelings experienced some consolation in escaping from his splendid mansion and princely establishment, to the less fastidious circles of the Continent.

It was gratifying to a man of his sensitive disposition to alienate his darling from her mother's low connexions and servile associates, to devote his whole time to her improvement, and by procuring for her the first masters that Italy could furnish, render her accomplishments worthy the brilliant fortune of which she was the sole inheritor. Nor did Leonora disappoint his partial expectations. Her beauty, talents, and gentleness, would have done honour to the most illustrious parentage. But above all, she was capable

of appreciating the high endowments of the father to whom she had proved a spring of hope in the wilderness; and they became united by a warmth of mutual affection that rather resembled the bond of friendship than filial and paternal love.

To do poor Mrs. Waddlestone justice, she never evinced the slightest jealousy. She regarded her husband and child as the two finest things in the world; and had not this partiality been exceeded by her reverence for those still finer things, money and rank, she might have been tamed down into less ostensible vulgarity. But as from her youth upwards (except in the instance of her tender passion for young Edward Meredyth) she had looked forward to achieving greatness, and even resented her husband's renunciation of a civic career, which might have rendered him a knight, and herself a ladyship, she was indefatigable in admonishing her daughter, when beyond the reach of her father's reproof, that she would never consent to her union with any man below the condition of a peer.

On Leonora's approach to womanhood, that vigilant and discriminating father became anxious to see her surrounded by the precepts and example of her own countrywomen; and her fifteenth birthday was celebrated in the country which has been stigmatized as a land of shopkeepers, but which, in habits and opinions, is decidedly the most aristocratic in Europe. No sooner was he settled at Waddlestone House, than he began to doubt the wisdom of his system of education, and to wish that he had endured the inferior associations of his destiny, and renounced the attractions of a long residence abroad. His wealth and intellectual resources had opened his way to the first society on the Continent. Persons of every rank advance a step in importance, by settling abroad; and the liberality, exquisite taste, and unexceptionable address of Mr. Waddlestone, had introduced him not only to the highest native circles of Italy, but to those of his titled countrymen by whom they were frequented.

But on returning to England the spell was broken! In his own country, Mr. Waddlestone felt that his place in society was that of a soap-boiler, and that his graceful, elegant Leonora must be ushered into the world under the auspices of an eminently vulgar woman, and sought in marriage by some person of a similar degree. His lovely child would either be rejected from the rank of life in which he desired to fix her destiny, or be sought from interested motives by some noble spendthrift; for the undisguised prejudice cherished by Mrs. Waddlestone for lords of every sort and denomination, made him tremble for the happiness of his daughter.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Launceston had made the acquaintance of the family; and the anxious father soon became favourably impressed by the frank disposition of Leonora's new admirer. He saw him untainted by the scornful self-sufficiency of his caste; uncontaminated by the narrow bigotry of fine-gentlemanism; and was delighted to perceive that the fancy entertained by his lord-loving lady for the Hon. Col. Rhyse and Lord Putney, previous to Launceston's arrival, was transferred to the new pretendant; for there was an unaffected cordiality of heart about Lord Launceston which placed him above the petty affectations of the exquisites and exclusives who already thronged around the heiress of five hundred thousand pounds.

But, acquainted with the perils and dangers of precipitate matrimony, Mr. W. was desirous that his daughter should extend her observations in the rank of life to which her mother's whims and her own dowry appeared to limit her choice, previous to an irrevocable decision. He had once fancied the docile Leonora to be inclined in favour of Lord Offaley's younger son, Horatio; and dreading her fickleness, renounced his former determination that she should enter into such circles only as were freely open to her mother. He even succeeded in persuading Mrs. Waddlestone that Leonora's interests would be best served by allowing her to make an occasional appearance in the world under the care of their Italian friends, the Duchess of Whitehaven, the Princesse de Guéménée, or Lady Wroxworth; and having accomplished this point, patiently waited the result.

Few things were nearer his heart than that she should strengthen her attachment for Lord Launceston, and cultivate the friendship of the gentle and amiable Lady Rawleigh. But earnestly as he desired it, he did not shrink from exposing her feelings to the ordeal of Almack's and the temptations of Calder House, in order to assure himself that she might be provided with fuller opportunities for the extension of her choice.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The town, the court, is beauty's proper sphere ;—
That is our heaven, and we are angels there.

In the gay circle thousand Cupids rove :—

The "House of Calder" is the court of Love !

LORD LYTTLETTON.

Short and cheerful were the days and nights that intervened previous to the fêtes at Calder House, for they were enlivened by half-a-dozen balls of minor importance; and the longest summer

day becomes abbreviated for fine ladies who open their eyes to its sunshine, towards three o'clock. Even the tedious monotony of night proves little wearisome to those for whose recreation Folly shakes her bells from midnight till sunrise.

More than once during the week Lady Rawleigh ventured to allude jestingly to Lady Sophia Lee's original reluctance to her project; for she had become one of the most eager debaters on the anticipated pleasures and splendours of the evening."

"It is true," she replied, "that on my arrival in England, I was bent on avoiding the society of these people. But I am unwilling to afford such persons as Mr. Vaux and Rochester the gratification of perceiving that they possess the power to influence my actions. Besides which, I have a latent object for wishing to join in the *mélée*."

"An object?" cried Frederica, suddenly checking her horse under the shade of one of the spreading elms that shelter the fair equestrians of Rotten-row; and approaching so near her friend, as to be out of the reach of Launceston's inquisition.

"No, no! I do not intend to part on such easy terms with my secret. The commonplace routine of a London season so rarely affords the gratification of a mystery, that I cannot dispense with even half a cloud in your favour. Thursday night, moreover, must of necessity reveal the secret."

But when Thursday night—the Thursday night—really arrived, Frederica was too much engaged in the general interests of the *fête* to retain any remembrance of Lady Sophia Lee's mysterious announcement. She had been too much harassed for several antecedent days by Sir Brooke's ebullitions of matrimonial irritation, in no slight measure augmented by the incident of the theatrical rendezvous, to concede, even to these, the importance so much their due. Unable to imagine any reasonable excuse for forbidding his wife's appearance at the *fête*, unwilling that she should join in its seductions without the restraint of his presence, yet loathing the necessity that compelled him to enter the enchanted circle of Calder House, the unhappy man was fidgeted beyond all the consolations of his philosophy. He had no ear to which he could intrust his domestic griefs; for Lady Launceston, through some strange obliquity of moral vision, seemed to regard this odious entertainment with exultation and delight. Sophronia, of Twickenham, was never more gratified than by hearing the names of her nephew and niece connected with that of the distinguished Calder; and poor Mrs. Martha, his never-failing source of sympathy, had taken this inopportune moment to convey herself and the dingy 'unet to Eastbourne, for change of dulness. "Mr. Richard

Derenzy and family" had also "departed" in the middle of the fashionable winter, to pass the summer at his seat in the fens of Lincolnshire; and thus, not one of the numerous savages of Sir Brooke's especial horde, was at hand to endure the brunt, or moderate the misgivings of, his ill-humour. Frederica began to think that the demon of discord had obtained a permanent settlement in Bruton-street; and Rawleigh, with the genuine near-sightedness of a jealous man, betrayed his apprehensions of the superior attractions of his rival's dwelling and society, by rendering his own disagreeable.

From these trivial but vexatious contrarieties, a prospect of escape to Lord Calder's land of faëry was indeed inviting; and never had Frederica entered her carriage at midnight with a lighter step or more sanguine expectations of pleasure, than when, plaided according to the utmost rigour of the law, she seated herself beside Lord Launceston on her way to Calder House, while Sir Brooke followed in the character of Mordaunt Merton and the chariot of Lady Sophia. In the course of a few minutes, they entered a courtyard disciplined by a regiment of policemen, and illuminated by the flashing of a hundred torches.

"Remember, Launceston, you are engaged to be my cavalier for the evening," whispered Lady Rawleigh to the bold Cleveland, when she perceived, through the gleaming windows of the splendid pile indications of a tremendous crowd.

"Certainly!—Unless you release me for the space of a waltz or two, with my pretty little wife. Leonora accompanies the Guéménées to night, who have taken upon themselves to misrepresent the Midsummer Night's Dream; my angel being, of course, Titania, and old Broughley the illustrious Bottom. But tell me, Frederica, what fair unknown is Rawleigh handing out of Lady Sophia's carriage?"—

"Herself, in the character of my blue-eyed sister, Brenda Troil."

"*'Juste ciel! il y en a deux!'* as the French ghost-seer exclaimed. But Lady Sophia's wraith is as black and ugly as Hecate."

"She has certainly recruited some stranger into our group, in the part of Norna of the Fitful Head?" cried Lady Rawleigh, in a tone of vexation. And she began to think herself ill-used, that her friend had not consulted her inclinations on the subject.

But to how incalculable a measure of indignation did this feeling expand, when, on joining Lady Sophia in the vestibule, she realised not only the intrusion of an importunate Norna into the community, but that this unwelcome addition—this importu-

appendix—this Zetland supererogation—was embodied in the person of Miss Elbany! In spite of the elf-locks wild that hung in hideous luxuriance round her walnut-stained countenance, in spite of the coarse and unsightly draperies that transformed her fine person into the semblance of decrepitude, there was no mistaking the large dark eyes and lofty brow of Lady Launceston's companion!

Frederica was paralyzed, at once by the audacity of the intruder and the unfair deception exercised upon herself. A thousand vagaries rushed into her mind in explanation of the event. Her infatuated parent had perhaps interested Lady Sophia in favour of her *protégée*. Or Sir Brooke himself was the confederate of a design which had tempted him to overcome his repugnance to Calder and his clique. As to her brother, there could be little doubt of *his* having acted as an accomplice from first to last. All her nearest and dearest had leagued themselves to force her into collision with a designing upstart—her rival with mother, brother, husband!

But the good-breeding of modern times interdicts a scene in society, even for the gratification of an angry beauty; and Frederica ascended the crowded stairs with much dignity, and without deigning to demand an explanation from any of the party. Had she condescended to bend either ear or eye towards their movements, she might have ascertained from the genuine and delighted start of astonishment which followed the ingenuous Launceston's recognition of Miss Elbany, that *he* at least was as complete a dupe as herself. As it was, Lady Rawleigh entered the gorgeous saloon with a spot burning on her cheek, and an air of perturbation fluttering her brow, that only too well became the agitated heroine of the *Pirate*.

Lady Sophia Lee, on the contrary, whose countenance sparkled with exultation arising either from gratified benevolence in re-uniting the lovers, or possibly from feminine love of mischief, seemed to have regained her earliest flush of youth in order to do justice to the beauties of the golden Brenda; and thus, chance imparted to either sister the expression best befitting her fictitious character. A murmur of approbation greeted the entrance of the group.

But what Ariosto-like pen might presume to describe the dazzling magnificence of the gallery devoted to the court of the Faëry Queen? Even Lady Rawleigh, though swelling under the consciousness of injury, and in some measure obscured in vision by rising tears of jealous resentment, was startled by the gorgeous arrangements of the scene. Experienced as she was in the Napoleon-like nature of Lady Rochester's charms, she had not pre-

pared herself for the splendour of Gloriana's attire, or the well-manufactured loveliness of her face. Seated on her throne of state, among bowers of blossoming orange-trees, radiant with smiles and diamonds, and fanned by a bevy of resplendent Cupids (Lord Johns, Lord Harries, and Lord Cecils, borrowed from the nurseries of her friends the Duchess of Lancaster and Lady Rosebank), by a very slight effort of indulgence, she might be said to picture the mother of the Graces. The gentle Una, meanwhile, wore a chaste holiness of brow, strongly contradictory of the report that she had smiled on Lord Putney's addresses. Lady Blanche Thornton, as Belphebe, seemed as well satisfied that

Upon her forehead many graces sat,
Under the shadow of her even brows,

as Mr. Vaux's flatteries could render her;—while Lady Barbara Dynley and Lady Waldington had tamed down their wandering glances into the simplicity of Fidelia and Speranza.

Lord Wallingford,—a second Lucifer in sin and beauty—was the representative of the Red Cross Knight; the milk-and-water nephew of Lord Calder, Alfred Rockingham, had been thrust into the part of Sir Satyrane; Sir Guyon was embodied by Lord Putney; the aged Celia by old Lady Huntingfield; and Charissa by the dowager Duchess of Ledbury. Vaux was the royal Arthur, Sir Caleb Thornton had consented to invest himself in Duessa's hideosities. Timeas was Sir Mark Milman; Mr. Fieldham was Artegal; Blandamour and Paridel, Sir Robert Morse and Mr. Erskyne; in a word, the fashionable world, however unconnected with these pages, was enlisted into the ranks of Spenser's gorgeous romance.

But notwithstanding the exquisite taste displayed throughout the draperies and grouping of the masque by Sir Philip Ochre, the fashionable academician, who had consented to act as stage-manager, the inefficiency of the actors contrived to convert it into a succession of ill-imagined and worse-executed tableaux. Lord Calder had previously concerted the arrangements of the evening so that the crimson velvet curtains, concealing the portion of the gallery destined to dramatic representation, might be drawn aside at the signal of an invisible orchestra on Lady Rawleigh's arrival; and few even of the uninitiated but perfectly understood, when the first soft measures of this seemingly supernatural music were heard, that the lovely woman by whose side his lordship had stationed himself, was the unacknowledged queen of the *fête*.

For full five minutes, every one was in an ecstasy of delight, and exclaimed that never was there exhibited so exquisite an illusio-

five minutes more, every one yawned, and wondered what would come next. And in the concluding five minutes of the quarter of an hour destined to the representation of a masque which had cost a thousand pounds or so in its preparations, every one whispered that the whole thing was a bore,—that Lady Rochester sat like an effigy and seemed to forget they had anything better to do than admire her ;—and that, after all, the best actor in the business was Mrs. Erakyne's lion,—a stuffed quadruped borrowed from the British Museum ! The spectators, in fact, were all dying to get rid of the Faëry Queen, that they might walk about and show their own costumes.

Meanwhile, Lord Launceston had riveted himself to the side of the Weird Woman of the Fitful Head ; while Sir Brooke Rawleigh found himself compelled to offer *his* escort to the blue-eyed Brenda ; and thus Lord Calder remained at liberty to act as guardian to the deserted Minna Troil.

"I have never yet been tempted to assume a fancy costume," he whispered, glancing at his dark and unadorned sleeve, as he drew her arm within his own, "But had I ventured to anticipate the honour I now experience, I would have laid aside, for once, these sober sable weeds, to assume the patriarchal dignity of Magnus Troil ; too happy to claim a father's authority over the destiny of the pensive Minna."

Lady Rawleigh attempted to regain her accustomed serenity as she listened to this allusion to the vexations clouding her brow. Had they been less real and less absorbing, her mistrust would probably have been excited by Lord Calder's artful affectation of a *paternal* tone. But while he was still speaking, a band stationed at the head of the grand staircase struck up a Polonaise ; and, heading the procession, he hastened to conduct Frederica through the suite of state rooms, crowded with the representatives of all nations and languages, attired in every variety of the superb and picturesque.

Dazzled by their gorgeous array, and startled from her personal meditations by the novelty, stir, and flurry of such a scene, she gradually forgot that Miss Elbany, escorted by the treacherous Rawleigh or the infatuated Launceston, was promenading behind her, and gave herself up to the illusions of the hour ;—to the animating inspiration of military music,—resplendent illuminations,—groves of unknown exotics,—and groups of all that was beautiful, illustrious, or grotesque, in fashionable nature.

There was the Duchess of Middlesex, one of the gravest and most spotless of matrons, exhibiting her loveliness in the costume of Raphael's Fornarina. There was Lady Lawford, all rouge and "owafeet, disfiguring the dress of Vandyke's Duchesse de St.

Croix. Lady Margaret Fieldham displayed a visage as harsh as that of Carabosse enveloped in the velvet coif and pearly carcanet of the beautiful Mary of Scotland; while the old Duchess of Trimblestown, grimly illuminated by diamond lanterns, had discriminatingly selected the farthingale and fraise of Catherine de Medicis, and looked fully capable of originating a second St. Bartholomew.

The bridal Viscountess, the plaintive little Lady Twadell, was elevated by the most sublime cork-heels that Melmotte could manufacture into the semblance of a pigmy Cleopatra; while her genuine antique of a Lord, periwigged and *grand-cordon*-ed into a courtier of the time of Louis XIV., looked three shades yellower than his hereditary point ruffles. The Coveys and Mapleberries had joined forces to form the brigade of the nine sisters of Parnassus; having furnished themselves with *ormolu* lyres, palettes, and flutes, which Lord Launceston persisted in mistaking for marrowbones and cleavers; and Lady Lotus, as chaperon of the classical group, had profited largely by Sir Christopher's store of Oriental bangles, armlets, and other Brahminical mysteries, to assume the full-orbed lustre of the Priestess Luxima. Sir Christopher Lotus himself, with a countenance as blank and wirewove as a new album, represented Sir Roger de Coverley; and the excellent Lady Wroxworth was admirably at home in Lady Lizard. Mr. Dynley, to whom Lady Rawleigh vouchsafed only a formal bow, formed an apt representative of Ali Pacha—

Full of strange oaths, and bearded like a pard;

closely followed by the lofty Indice, converted by a peaked and hungry beard into the hyperbolical Malvolio,—a sneer on his lips, and a chamberlain's wand in his hand.

Just as they reached a vestibule dividing the suite from a staircase, or rather reuniting it with the Masque gallery, so that there was no possibility of escape or evasion, Frederica recognized, at the opposite entrance, the splendid group of the Midsummer Night's Dream; and the beautiful Princesse de Guéménée, attired as the buskined Hyppolita, with a diamond crescent sparkling on her imperial brow, immediately paused to receive the homage of the lordly host. Her Theseus was Count Rodenfels, familiarised by birthright with the dignities of royal representation. The Prince was Lysander; and two daughters of Lady Waldington, Helena and Hermia. But all eyes were attracted towards the elfin crew completing the picture; consisting of the Rodenfels' children as Moth, Peaseblossom, and Cobweb,—Colonel Rhyse as Robin Goodfellow,—Prince Albert de Guéménée as Oberon, and Leonora—

Lord Launceston's Leonora—as Titania. Her father's liberal partiality had encircled her innocent brows with diamond stars. Her zone was wrought with mystic characters in the most precious gems,—her silver wand tipped with "one entire and perfect chrysolite;" while her draperies of silver tissue were looped with strings of oriental pearls. Frederica felt a thrill of delight as she noted the delicate loveliness of the queen of the fairies; and recalled to mind the hideous transformation to which Miss Elbany's vanity had consented, in order to insure an entrance into Calder House: She even commiserated the self-reproach which she could not but attribute to her brother on finding thus strangely united in his presence, his gentle and neglected,—his bold and triumphant love.

As the rival parties were of too familiar acquaintance in society to "pass and make no sign," Lady Rawleigh profited by the colloquy between Lord Calder and the Amazonian queen to turn round for the first time during their promenade, and ascertain the effect produced on her companions by the encounter. But Lady Sophia and Mordaunt Merton were deeply engaged in some seemingly interesting conversation; and she had scarcely an opportunity to note that Sir Brooke, even in the assumed character of Brenda's adorer, wore an air of intense vexation. On the present occasion, however, it was neither her husband nor her friend who moved her mischievous curiosity. She hastened to bend an inquiring glance towards her brother—the ferocious Norna—and the queen of the fairies!

Leonora, holding the hand of the young Prince de Guéménée, was standing only a few paces distant from Lord Launceston; looking all the loveliness that might be supposed to cover him with confusion. But to the utter amazement of Frederica, not a vestige of shame clouded the expression of his frank and open countenance. He seemed as well satisfied with himself, as with the aspect of his bride, or the vicinity of the lady clinging to his arm; nay! to the increasing astonishment of his sister, he presumed to kiss the tip of his finger to the smiling and gratified Titania, with an air of affectionate recognition and intelligence. It was really too much!

And Miss Elbany? How did her usual lofty self-possession uphold her through such an ordeal? Lady Rawleigh felt that her surprise would not be the least augmented by seeing the Companion imitate the assurance of the bold Pirate, and bestow a condescending salutation on the heiress. But this trial she was spared. Instead of boldly confronting the stately Theseus and his train, Lucy had shaken her black elf-locks over her shoulders and countenance, so that the expression of her face was concealed from observation; and stood describing circles with her wizard staff.

that staff so different in its powers of enchantment from the light and jewelled wand of her rival.

Uncertain whether she were aware of her proximity to the affianced wife of Lord Launceston, and rendered indignant by her brother's uncompromising defiance of propriety, Frederica turned towards them with the intention of addressing his lordship in such terms as might reveal the fact. But at that moment "came wandering by a figure like a"—numskull's—being that of Lord George, as Petrarch arrayed for his coronation at the Capitol, in a robe of crimson velvet, with a pyramidal cap encircled with a garland of bays; while his cloak of white satin was borne, according to the authentic formula of the Roman solemnity, by "a young girl with dishevelled locks, her feet bare, her figure enveloped in a leopard's skin, to represent ENTHUSIASM." But alas! for this uninviting personification, his lordship had been unable to secure a younger or fairer nymph than Lady Lavinia Lisle; and as he stalked sublimely into the room, followed on tiptoe by the little be-cardinalled general, his uncle, Lord Launceston affected to mistake the inspired damsel, in her shaggy drapery, for some Caribbean queen escaped from her wigwam in pursuit of a human meal.

"She certainly must belong to one of the cannibal tribes," he exclaimed aloud: while Sir Brooke Rawleigh, by way of cover to the impertinence of his brother-in-law, advanced towards Laura's lover and intreated him to do justice to the charms of his Brenda in an impromptu sonnet.—

"To heavenly themeth thublimer thwainth belong!"

lisped the lyrical lord; and the band again striking up, the procession returned into the gallery.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

You to whom nature
Gave with a liberal hand most excellent form,
With education, language, and discourse
And judgment to distinguish; when you shall
With feeling sorrow understand how wretched
And miserable you have made yourself,
And but yourself have nothing to accuse,
—Can you, with hope, from any beg compassion?

THE LITTLE FRENCH LAWYER.

THE morning sun was shining brightly on the roses and pinks in Lady Rawleigh's dressing-room window, when, at length disengaged of her Scottish costume and Mrs. Pasley's attendance, she threw herself down on the sofa, in the luxurious ease of solitude,

and a cambric peignoir ; to enjoy the freshness of the air, and meditate upon the clamorous crowd at Calder House from which she had just escaped.

The fragrance of early morn is a long-established theme for the eloquence of budding poets, heroines of a vicarage breakfast-table, and worshippers of sweet syllabub and sweet sentiment throughout the world. The hay-field—the bean-field—the hawthorn-hedge—the rose just washed in a shower and the woodbine just budding in a bower—have had honourable mention in all collections of select poetry, whether invested in calf “for the use of schools,” or in morocco or tabby, for the use of lords and ladies afflicted with a dull country-house and unpunctual cook. But which among these was ever half so skilled to appreciate the charms of “the incense-breathing morn,” as a London fine lady, escaping from the effluvia of expiring lamps, dying tapers, fading flowers, and stale Eau de Cologne, to the fresh breeze of the early day, and the silence of her own chamber?

Frederica had been often conscious of the relief produced on the fête-fevered frame by such a transition ; had often thrown open her window to enjoy an atmosphere still pure from the sooty exhalations of fifty-thousand hearths, still unshaken by the vociferation of a million and a half of human beings. But never had she felt so agreeably released from the sense of moral and physical oppression as when, exchanging the motley glare of the Calder masque for the calm seclusion of home, she leant her cheek upon her hand, to muse over the miracles of the night.

There appeared no solution to its mysteries—no end to its annoyances. From the coldness of Sir Brooke’s demeanour towards her, to the alarming warmth of Lord Calder’s devotion—from her brother’s nonchalance, to Lady Sophia’s officious interference—from Miss Elbany’s unabashable presumption, to Leonora’s childish infatuation—all was inexplicable.

While Lady Blanche, Lady Barbara, Louisa Erskyne, and others equally artful and envious, returned home burning with indignation at the honours offered by the lord of revels to a personage so little resplendent as Lady Rawleigh, and the remembrance of Frederica in her simple robe of muslin and tartan, leading the Polonaise and sharing the velvet canopy of the royal supper-table presided by Lord Calder, the object of their jealousy had not a thought to bestow on these superfluous honours. Instead of pluming herself on the distinctions of the evening, she regarded the Calder House festivities as a source of unequivocal humiliation. Miss Elbany had suddenly re-appeared on the stage, as if issuing from the trap-door of a pantomime. As to Leonora,—poor Leonora,—poor dear

Leonora,—the business was really too deplorable; and the tears came into her eyes as she thought of it.

People who live in the world,—or rather who never live out of the world,—are compelled to seize upon very extraordinary moments for their confidences and declarations! There is not a third-rate belle of a second-rate country town, who would pour her soft sorrows into the bosom of a sympathising friend, in any situation less romantic than a bower full of moonlight, or a wood full of nightingales. There is not a small attorney throughout the wolds of Yorkshire, who would offer his little self, his little business, and his little heritage to their acceptance, in any locale less romantic than

“Under the hawthorn in the dale.”

In Andalusia, the soft confession would be murmured to a guitar accompaniment; or on the Carron-side, piped forth in “oaten stop or pastoral song.”

But amid the sophistications of the metropolis, a vast deal of love and friendship is necessarily made in public. Proposals are tendered during the dismemberment of a chicken’s wing; and sentimental confidences uttered while Musard is screwing-up his fiddle-strings. It was during Lord Calder’s search after the finest *brugnon à la glace* of an extensive pyramid, for the lady of his thoughts, that he had presumed to breathe a few syllables somewhat less icy. It was when Frederica had retired into the cool seclusion of an open window, aftersupper, to look out on the illuminated gardens; that Titania,—having stolen away from Puck, Peaseblossom, Moth, Cobweb, and Mustard,—ventured to give utterance to certain acknowledgments, which now brought tears into the eyes of Lady Rawleigh. They had not, however, been wholly unsought on Frederica’s part. Indignant to perceive the neglect evinced by Lord Launceston towards his wealthy bride, she more than hinted to Leonora her surprise that no part had been offered him or been sought by him, in the Princesse de Guéménée’s party; and her manner was so much that of sisterly interrogation, that the Queen of the Fairies was deeply touched by her sympathy. With blushes and faltering tones more genuine than are usually to be found at a fancy ball, she murmured a confession that she had long been anxious for a few words of explanation with Lord Launceston’s sister.

“Nothing,” said poor Leonora, “would have restrained my desire to tell you all the afflicting embarrassment of my situation, but the certainty that you would consider me guilty of presumptuous familiarity. Believe me, I am fully aware of the distance between us;—nay! even of your own sense of it. Yet so desirous am I of obtaining your good opinion, that I would vent

much to explain the painful nature of my connexion with Lord Launceston. I am persuaded you must be aware of the truth,—that my folly is fully known to you ;—and I tremble to think of the strength and rashness of an attachment which has induced me to risk the happiness of my life on so wild a cast."

Frederica was hesitating whether to enter more fully into the subject, and open Miss Waddlestone's eyes to the critical position of her engagement, when the name of Miss Elbany was suspended on her lips by the approach of Messrs. Dynley and Indice; who, perceiving two persons engaged in an interesting dialogue apart from intrusion, considered it their duty as disagreeable members of society to interpose. Till the little prince made his appearance to claim his partner, they fastened importunately on their victims.

But after all, neither the husband nor the lover,—the friend nor the brother,—the brother's chosen, nor the brother's rejected,—formed the most perplexing subject of Lady Rawleigh's musings. Through some coincidence equally strange with that originating Lord Calder's sighs and Leonora's tears, Mrs. William Erskynetook it into her little head to appear at the *fête* at once in the character of Una, and of—a *dun*! Scarcely had Indice and Dynley withdrawn their persecution, when Louisa sauntered towards her friend's retreat, and niched herself into the window vacated by Oberon's Queen.

"I wish myself joy of the luck of finding you alone, Frederica," said she, passing her hand through her silken ringlets, and affecting a yawn of exhaustion to conceal her embarrassment. "I have called on you twice within these three days (like Howell and James's collecting clerk), with my 'small account'; but whether you were riding with your new duenna, Lady Sophia, or had preternatural warnings of an unpaid bill, you remained invisible."

"You imagine, then, that my sentence of not at home is framed in contradiction to the usual terms, and runs 'No *exclusion* except on business?'"

"Such at least is my own, and there used to exist some little sympathy between our whims, fancies, and follies!"

"And your small account is a catalogue of horses hired, & pâtes devoured. I am really ashamed to have overlooked it long," said Lady Rawleigh, wishing to avoid a prolongation her giddy friend's discourse.

"By no means. *That* account amounts to a mere paltry fifteen guineas, scarcely worth a visit of explanation. The grand affair the Opera. The season being almost over, Laporte is obliged to gather together his credits and debits; and ours, I am ashamed to say, amounts in its united enormity to three hundred pounds,

You will perceive by the circular which I must send you to-morrow, am certain that two hundred was the sum originally specified. ut I find, on inquiry, that *three* is the universal price paid by our eighbours ; and I conclude we had better submit with a good race. I have promised to remit the money to the treasurer the beginning of next week."

Now the heaven-born Una was too deeply intent on vindicating her own error or deception in the amount of the claim, to observe the change effected on Frederica's countenance by this intelligence. Even had she noticed that Minna assumed as deathlike a paleness as if Cleveland had that moment announced his lawless vocation, Louisa Erskyne would have found it difficult to conceive that a person at once so opulent and prudent as Rawleigh's bride and Lady Launceston's only daughter, could be at any moment deficient in cash. At one time, she had half intended to beg the remaining hundred and fifty, her own portion of the debt, as a loan from her friend ; when a recollection of those rumoured losses at Ash Bank, which had reached her ears through her friend Lady Barbara, suggested the possibility of a refusal. She had therefore hastened to levy her supplies in a far more dangerous quarter ; and having exonerated herself from the stigma of a wilful mis-statement of the price of the Opera-box, had little interest in the annoyance which her carelessness might have produced to Frederica.

"I was not prepared for so large a sum," was Lady Rawleigh's quiet reply ; "but if you consider the claim a fair one, I will take care not to disappoint you. How very handsome Lady Rochester is looking to-night," she continued, in order to evade a further chapter on finance.

"Yes ! her zeal in her own service is untirable. No one is half so religious in her adoration of 'the cosmetic powers.' Lord Calder, I perceive, has assisted her splendours with the family casket, for this occasion, and made her at once the queen of diamonds and queen of hearts. By the way, my dear Fred., who is the amphibious monster, half-mermaid, half-maniac, appended to your group ? Is she intended as a foil to Minna or to Brenda ; or is it Lord Launceston's tutor in disguise ? or Captain Cleveland's master's-mate ?"

"It is Lady Sophia Lee's Swiss footman, as you are probably well aware," replied Lady Rawleigh in the same bantering vein.

"We fancied he might be useful in the crowd."

"I should have thought Lord Calder's attendance would have insured *your* safety," said Louisa, in a tone of pique. But all further impertinence was arrested on her bitter lips, by the arrival of Sir Brooke Rawleigh and Lady Sophia ;—one of whom she systematically avoided from dislike, and the other from fear. The

came to inquire for Norna and the Pirate, and propose departure ; and thus ended Lady Rawleigh's evening of joy and triumph ; and such was the nature of the distress which embittered her matin cogitations on her return to the dressing-room.

It was not till towards noon that Frederica closed her eyes ; having determined to apply to her mother for advice and assistance. It was not till the afternoon sunshine had brought out the butterflies of fashion, that she opened them again, on Pasley's announcement that Lord Launceston was waiting for her in the drawing-room.

Languid and dispirited, she hurried through her toilet, certain that her brother was come to magnify the measure of her vexations by some untoward announcement ; perhaps of his rupture with Titania—perhaps of his engagement to Miss Elbany.

"My dear Fred.!" cried he, dropping the *Morning Post* to take her offered hand—"I am come to throw myself on your mercy ; and in case you should harden your heart, to bully you into commiseration. It is now useless to deny your connivance in Lucy's plots. The affair of last night convinces me you have been in her confidence throughout ; and unless you choose to explain the whole truth and reveal your fair friend, whether as fiend or angel, prepare for my worst vengeance."

"And can you really imagine," cried Frederica, "that I am sufficiently blind to your interests, to have any share in the plans and projects of such a person? You must apply to mamma, or Rawleigh, or the Lees, for any information you require. I have learned nothing on the subject, but that a blank card was procured for her from Lord Calder through the interference of Lady Sophia. Had I been previously apprised of the fact, nothing would have induced me to appear at the *réte* in connexion with an obscure adventurer, whose conduct naturally produces very unfavourable impressions of her character."

"You have nothing to urge against Lucy, my dear sister, but her poverty, which compels her to accept a situation in our family unworthy her talents and merits."

"And which she prudently turns to account by entangling the affections of the son of her patroness, and accepting the caresses of her son-in-law!"

"What do you mean to insinuate, Frederica?" cried Lord Launceston, starting from the sofa with an air that would have done infinite credit to his Pirate of the preceding night.

"To *insinuate*—nothing ; but simply to assert that your immaculate Lucy was detected by two ladies, whose respectability equals ~~ir~~ rank, in the act of blushing her approval, while Sir Brooke Sleigh covered her hand with kisses."

"Insolent blockhead! And pray, what explanation does your husband offer for his folly?"

"I have sought none; having been bound by a promise to my informant to take no steps in the affair."

"I always entertain the worst opinion of your sneaking, hypocritical, prosing, proper-behaved fellow!" cried Launceston, in a rage. "Were I not fettered by my unfortunate engagements to the Waddlestone family—"

"Unfortunate!" interrupted his sister. "Leonora is only too good and too charming to be sacrificed in a manner so unworthy."

"Most true! She is an angel!" exclaimed Launceston, in the honesty of his enthusiasm. "But believe me—"

No further demand, however, was destined to be made on Lady Rawleigh's credulity. At that moment, Sir Brooke burst into the room,—his face as white as death,—his lips quivering,—and with an air as little "sneaking, hypocritical, or prosaic," as that of the most *improper-behaved* gentleman in London. Launceston, who had cherished a strong previous inclination to knock him down on the occasion of their first encounter, was actually startled into silence by his obvious agitation.

"May I inquire," said the disordered baronet, addressing Frederica in a low but concentrated voice, "whether you remember to whom you paid the bill and bank-note you received from Ruggs!"—

"To—to Lord Calder!" faltered Lady Rawleigh, growing almost as pale as her husband.

"I thank you," replied Sir Brooke, placing himself in a chair from mere inability to stand. "I thank you for your prompt candour. I thank you, Frederica, for your consideration for my honour,—your tenderness for your own reputation—your self-denial amid the temptations of society—your eagerness to deserve my confidence. I thank you,—I thank you," he cried—involuntarily smiting his forehead with his clenched hand—"for showing me to the whole world as the poor, degraded, miserable fool I am!"—

"What the devil do you mean!" cried the intemperate Launceston, his previous displeasure excited to fury by this inexplicable attack upon his sister. "If you have any serious charge to make against Lady Rawleigh,—I am here,—ready to—"

"Launceston!" said Sir Brooke, with great feeling and some dignity, "this is no time for foolish bluster. Had Frederica's conduct incurred what *you* would call a serious charge, or if I used the word dishonour in its worst sense, you had not found me in her presence or in yours. We could not have met again under this roof. But when I find my wife engaged in secret transactions of a pecuniary nature with a man of the most notoriously licentious character

"Allow me to say, sir," cried Lord Launceston,—perceiving that Frederica was incapable of uttering a syllable,—"that there is nothing peculiarly secret in an affair transacted under the observation of some two hundred individuals. However blamable my sister's losses at play, they were incurred in the presence of the whole party at Ash Bank; and in some degree at the instigation of Lady Olivia."

"PLAY!" murmured poor Rawleigh, who had always looked upon écarté as one of the darling snares spread by Satan for the entrapment of womankind. "*My wife a gambler?*—Lady Rawleigh branded with the shame of so gross a vice?" and he literally shuddered at the idea.

"A single error,—a solitary inadvertence,—repented of, and unrepeated, scarcely deserves this violence," said Lord Launceston, bluntly; for his recent discovery of Rawleigh's peccadilloes served in a great measure to extenuate in *his* opinion the folly or criminality of his sister. "Frederica's indiscretion on this occasion—"

"Has sufficed," cried Sir Brooke, "to expose her to the censures of the world, and place an irrevocable stigma on her reputation. The whole affair must instantly become public. The servant to whom Lady Rawleigh intrusted the confidential letter containing the amount of her debts, has feloniously embezzled the money,—will die on the gallows;—while I—"

He paused.—A deep groan and heavy fall on the floor announced that poor Frederica had fallen from her seat in a state of insensibility.—

CHAPTER XXXV.

Mais que diable alloit-elle faire dans cette galère?

MOLIERE.

THE explanation given by Sir Brooke Rawleigh to his impetuous brother-in-law, when the delinquent had recovered sufficiently to be removed to her own room and Mrs. Pasley's wondering sympathy, was somewhat more coherent, though by no means more satisfactory, than that which had proved so overwhelming to poor Lady Rawleigh. It appeared that the identical Mr. Thomas who had dealt so unceremoniously with Mameluke's mouth, and even with Lord Launceston himself on the occasion of Lord Calder's mysterious visit in the absence of Sir Brooke, was the servant sent by his lady to convey her letter and enclosure to Calder House: and that, having been trained, as has been already observed, in services the highest fashion, he was unwilling to remain ignorant point so much in dispute in various still-rooms and servants'-

halls of his acquaintance, as the intimacy between "my lord" and his lady. The under-housemaid in Bruton-street had expressed some curiosity on the subject; and Lord Calder's own man was by no means indifferent. In short, his deliberations ended with opening the letter; and after ceding to this first temptation,—in appropriating the contents to his own use. Having thrown off Sir Brooke's livery on pretext of visiting a dying parent, and speedily dissipated the fifty and twenty-pound notes, Mr. Thomas was at length induced to present the bank-bill; and was consequently in custody on suspicion of theft. Lady Rawleigh, in her ignorance of business, having omitted to endorse the document, and the embezzler being unable to give a satisfactory account of the mode by which it came into his possession, he was detained for further investigation. "Frederica Rawleigh," in whose favour the bill was drawn, was accordingly summoned to appear in Bow-street; and eleven o'clock on the following morning was appointed by the solicitor to the Bank, for the re-examination of the parties. Nothing in short could be more distressing than the publicity of the case; and Lord Launceston could not but sympathize in the profound mortification of his brother-in-law, on becoming first acquainted with his wife's indiscretions through such a channel.

But what were the feelings of poor Frederica herself, when, having summoned her brother to her dressing-room, she was gradually and considerately made acquainted with the particulars of the affair. Her first grief arose from finding herself the indirect cause of a fellow-creature's guilt,—a fellow-creature's ignominious death;—her next, from her husband's deep and merited displeasure:—her last from the discovery that Lord Calder's increased familiarity of demeanour towards her, proceeded from a belief that she was in his power, his debtor without compunction or apology. Deeply did she repent the folly which had placed her in so disgraceful a position!

Nor was the business amended when, after a visit to Gray's-inn (and poor Sir Brooke could not but revert to his frequent journeys towards that factory of "deeds without a name" during his pin-money-and-jointure deliberations the preceding year), the husband and brother ascertained that her ladyship's personal appearance was indispensable; and that Lord Calder himself would be required to give evidence and prosecute, as one of the defrauded parties. Lord Launceston, who felt, in spite of his constitutional levity and inconsideration, the urgent necessity of strict prudence in conducting the affair, and of adopting, for Frederica's sake, every measure likely to diminish its publicity, wisely laid aside his repugnant Calder House and its proprietor, and hastened thither to

the dilemma, and request his lordship's co-operation. He found the garlands, and triumphal arches, and temporary orchestras in the act of removal, and the mansion still uncleared from its decorations of the preceding night. But Lord Launceston's name secured immediate admittance; and he was ushered into a little secluded book-room, untouched by the disorders of the fête, and secure from the intrusion of importunate visitors.

At no moment is the charm of high-breeding more strongly felt, than that which compels a person to seek a concession from a superior, whose goodwill he has never sought to conciliate. Lord Launceston was aware that he had demeaned himself, on many occasions, with singular ungraciousness towards the proprietor of that gorgeous palace. But from the moment of Lord Calder's entrance, he was taught to suppose that he was conferring a favour by asking one.

Launceston was fervently attached to his sister. Her marriage and his own engagements had, it is true, in some measure interfered with their warm and exclusive attachment; and for some weeks past, he had even begun to consider her more as the fashionable Lady Rawleigh, than as his own dear gentle little Fred. But no sooner was she in danger of misinterpretation, and surrounded by vexations, than he remembered her only as the tender, timid, relying sister, who had loved him so fondly throughout her various stages of childhood, girlhood, and womanhood; and whose name, and fame, and heart's blood were intimately kindred with his own.

On finding, therefore, in Lord Calder, an eager participant in his anxiety to spare her feelings and render this unpleasant affair as private as possible, he experienced a momentary conviction that the courteous well-bred brother of Lady Rochester, was a more civilized individual than the brother-in-law he had left in Bruton-street, raging and storming against the iniquities of écarté; and maintaining that the interests of society ought not to be compromised by levity towards his felonious footman. Everything spoke in Lord Calder's favour; his easy mode of proposing an adjustment of the affair;—his indifference to public justice in comparison with the private feelings of an innocent woman; his quiet tone and unexaggerated expressions of regret at the whole transaction;—and Lord Launceston left the house with some degree of prejudice in favour of those

“ Men of the world who know the world like men ! ”

Having made an appointment to drive with Lord Calder to Bow-street the following morning, his next visit was to Lady Olivia 'adcaster, an unsuitable comforter to the sorrowful, or assistant to

the perplexed. But he was as unwilling to circulate the affair beyond the limits of his own family, as to abandon Frederica to the angry counsels of Sir Brooke; and though satisfied that Lady Sophia Lee would have been a far more satisfactory companion to his sister, he was too well acquainted with the lofty spirit of that lady, to promote an altercation between her and Rawleigh. Lord Launceston rightly conjectured that Lady Olivia's love of business, and predilection for the circumstantialities of life, would divert his brother-in-law's attention and indignation from his wife and her offences.

He had the less reluctance to communicate the business to his fussy aunt, since she was in some measure the cause of the mischief; and had his delicacy recoiled from the task, it would have been quickly reassured by Lady Olivia's comments on the transaction. After listening with due attention to the details of Frederica's misfortunes, her ladyship exclaimed—"She certainly must have lost her senses!—that a niece of mine should venture two hundred and eighty pounds against an experienced player like Lord Calder; and then show herself so ignorant of business as to pay away a bank-bill without endorsement!"

Even Lord Launceston was little aware, when he left his sister to the care of the aunt whom he persuaded to accompany him to Bruton-street, how often her self-upbraidings would be interrupted, by—"But what in the name of wonder, my dear, induced you to pay away a bank-bill without endorsement?"

Meanwhile his Lordship was not inactive. Through the mediation of Messrs. Marwill and Makewill, the examination of Thomas Cuthbert was appointed to be held in the magistrates' private room; and everything was whispered by this kind brother to Lady Rawleigh in the course of the preceding evening, that could tranquillize her alarms.

On the morrow, her tribulations began at an early hour. Launceston had persisted in preventing a *tête-à-tête* between the husband and wife, by inviting the lady of Ash Bank to breakfast with his sister and support her by matronly countenance during her visit to Bow-street; and so seldom in the course of her life had Lady Olivia been blest by an introduction into an atmosphere so congenial with her taste as that of a magistrate's room, or by the exciting prospect of hanging a dishonest footman, that she would not listen to the excuses of her niece. Before nine, she found her way to Frederica's bedside, to commiserate her swollen eyelids and pallid cheeks.

But Lady Rawleigh was scarcely conscious of her presence. She could think of nothing but her coming humiliations; a terrible interview with an offended husband, and appearance before

implacable dispenser of the law. She was not aware that, during Lady Olivia's *tête-à-tête* dinner with Sir Brooke the preceding day, her ladyship's details of the *écarté* affair at Ash Bank, had in some measure tended to exculpate her niece; and that he was now satisfied that his wife was neither an habitual nor a clandestine gambler. The precarious state of Lady Launceston's health would have rendered it as injudicious to consult *her* on the original, as on the present occasion. As to himself, the reflections of four and twenty hours had convinced him that his recent demeanour towards Frederica was ill calculated to conciliate her confidence or smooth the path of confession.

He met her, therefore, with a brow less moody and an address less frigid than she had anticipated. During their drive to Bow-street, the few words that passed between them were of a friendly nature; and both parties were too deeply engrossed, to resent or answer Lady Olivia's admonitions to her niece on the subject of an accurate endorsement of all future bank-bills.

"The only use of a bank-bill, my dear," said she, as the carriage stopped before an entrance, smelling of gin and tobacco, "is to secure from fraud all private money-transactions between persons at a distance. Had you endorsed that bill, or if Mr. Ruggs had done his duty by instructing you on the subject—"

"This way, ladies, if you please!" interrupted an officer with a staff, or rather a staff with an officer, for the virtue of office appeared peculiarly resident in the baton; and, after groping their way through a dirty passage, Frederica found her hand pressed in her brother's, while Lord Calder silently placed a chair for her in the least ostensible corner of the room. For some minutes, indeed, both the room and its inmates were indistinguishable to her swimming eyes; and her bosom panted as though the heart within would burst its bounds. But Frederica had promised herself to repress her emotions, and exert her utmost efforts to evade a scene of feminine weakness on so unpromising a stage; nay, to collect her courage sufficiently to yield all the evidence in her power in favour of the delinquent. On recovering her self-possession, she perceived the unhappy man standing opposite, closely attended by two familiars of the office, and wearing on his livid lips and sallow brow, accusations of vice, if not of crime; and Frederica felt her heart grow sick at the mere sight of the man. For many months past he had been her attendant. She had seen him last in the trimly array and powdered neatness peculiar to the menials of a respectable establishment; and already he had contracted a wagging air of degradation. Involuntary the idea presented

If to her mind of the hangman busy with the miserable being

before her, and with difficulty she repressed the shriek that rose to her lips.

The tissue of fashionable life is of so flimsy and artificial a texture, that when a person, surrounded by the sparkling brilliancy of prosperity, stumbles accidentally against the realities of penury and suffering—of crime and condemnation—the impression is indeed powerful. But a malefactor incited to guilt through their own carelessness or bad example, a life forfeited to the law and unredeemable by their utmost efforts, is a lesson of exceptional severity. Lady Rawleigh, who would not willingly have caused the death of a fly, felt, with a thrill of icy horror, that she had been the means of sacrificing a fellow-creature.

Under this awful impression it may be imagined with what amazement she found her attention claimed by a gentleman in a rusty black coat, very indifferently furnished with his Majesty's English, and very superabundantly endowed with his Majesty's authority; who, in honour of so distinguished an auditory, indulged in an unusual amount of facetiousness; but as few minor officials exhibit the originality of the Procurator Fiscal and Daddie Rat, it may be as well to leave the tribunal of the Heart of Mid Lothian in solitary but triumphant possession of the field of fiction. Lady Olivia, it is true, exhibited at once the pragmati-cal-ity of Saddletree, and the demented incoherence of Madge Wildfire; and to many persons, Lord Calder in particular, Frederica herself rivalled the united attractions of Effie and Jeannie Deans. But his lordship, as he gazed upon her silently, dropping tears, was far more tempted to compare her with Byron's description of Prince Azo's guilty wife; more especially when, on learning that the examination was postponed and the prisoner remanded till a future day, to enable Mr. Ruggs to make his appearance and identify the bill, as well as for the determination of some legal doubts as to the extent of his amenability to the law, she suddenly clasped her hands together, and uttered an almost audible prayer, that the culprit's life might be spared, through the informality suggested.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Scandal, a busy fiend, in Truth's disguise,
 Like Fame, all cover'd o'er with ears and eyes,
 Learns the fond tale, and spreads it as she flies :
 Nor spreads alone, but alters, adds, defames ;—
 Affects to pity, though her duty blames ;
 Pretends to weigh the fact in even scale,
 And wish, at least, that justice may prevail :
 Insinuates, dissembles, lies, betrays,—
 Plays the whole hypocrite such various ways,
 That innocence itself must suffer wrong,
 And honour bleed, the prey of Slander's tongue.

SOAME JENTYN.

FREDERICA was still lying on the feverish couch to which she had been consigned on her return from the police-office, when towards evening the following note from Lord Calder was placed in her hands :—

" Dear Lady Rawleigh,

" The amiable solicitude you expressed this morning for the fate of Thomas Cuthbert, has induced me to consult several eminent professional men in his behalf ; and my friends the Vice-Chancellor and Attorney-General having given it as their opinion that the bill, without endorsement, was an invalid document and destitute of any real value, the solicitor of the Bank has withdrawn his charge. Pray believe me, with very sincere regret that this unpleasant business should have caused you one moment's concern,

Your ladyship's obedient servant,
 CALDER.

" Calder House, Saturday."

The transition of feeling arising from the welcome intelligence thus imparted, was almost too much for Frederica's gentle frame, already shaken by the vicissitudes of three eventful days and the vigils of three sleepless nights. Her tears burst forth with hysterical violence. Pressing to her heart the official papers enclosed by Lord Calder in corroboration of his statement, she uttered a thousand incoherent exclamations, and no longer capable of self-restraint, her mind became involved in darkness. Her latest remembrance was that of strangers surrounding her bedside ; and when her consciousness was fully restored, she found that a night and a day had elapsed in feverish delirium, and that her brother and husband were affectionately watching the progress of her recovery.

" I have been lightheaded, have I not ? " she faintly exclaimed ;

extending her hand to Sir Brooke, who tenderly pressed it to his lips, imploring her to desist from all agitating inquiries.

"I am well and happy now;—my pains and troubles are over!" faltered Frederica. "I feel as if I had passed through some great danger, or experienced some severe affliction. Let me see—ah! I remember now—I recollect it now. After all, it *was* no dream!"

And again she hid her face with her hands, while Sir Brooke Rawleigh implored her to dismiss the past from her thoughts; and her brother, still more judiciously, began to introduce topics of general conversation;—to talk to her of Lady Launceston's health,—of Lady Olivia's project of a tour to St. Petersburg,—and of Lady Twadell's report that Lord Trevelyan had actually arrived in England. Grateful for his efforts to withdraw her attention from herself, Frederica tried to appear interested in these announcements; and with her eyes fixed upon the kindly expression of her husband's countenance, enjoyed all that languid sensation of convalescence which the release from pain, and gratitude for the interest it has excited in those we love, render so exquisitely delightful.

Meanwhile, Rumour, with her thousand tongues, had not been inactive. The season was drawing to its close, without having afforded anything very striking in the way of either gaiety or scandal. The faëry masque was not only over, but had already become an obsolete theme, and nothing remained in prospect but the breakfast at Waddlestone House, Lady A. was dead, Lady B. divorced, both forgotten;—and the only animating object in view was the martyrdom of the lovely Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford. Even her intimates might be forgiven some little eagerness for the struggle; for should she escape unhurt, they had not a chance of any other source of excitement previous to their sad departure to the domestic happiness of their country seats!

Under these circumstances, it is not wonderful that Lady Blanche Thornton's maid on calling to inquire of Mrs. Pasley "quite promiscuously," whether it was true that they were to have the pleasure of meeting at Leamington, previous to the Warwick races, should lend an eager ear to the account of "my lady's sudden seizure all along of them low fellows, the footmen, opening a confidential letter addressed by her ladyship to Lord Calder," and a magnifying tongue to her own repetition of the story; or that Mr. Indice, on meeting Lord Calder and Launceston at the premature hour of eleven, in the mysterious dark-green chariot, should have suspected a duel, followed them in his cabriolet to Bow-street, and propagated a whisper on his return to White's, that Lady Rawleigh, under the countenances of her brother and aunt, and supported by

the testimony of Lord Calder, had been exhibiting articles of the peace against her husband! In the dog-days, scandal, like every other pestilence, becomes imminently contagious; and long before Thomas Cuthbert's sentence of enlargement was pronounced, Frederica was condemned, executed, and given over to Surgeons' Hall, by a jury of her fashionable friends; whose forewoman, Mrs. William Erskyne, affected to weep while she delivered the impartial verdict!

Lady Sophia Lee, however, was too slightly entangled in the meshes of the great world, to be implicated in the decree. She knew nothing of Lady Rawleigh's disastrous adventures; and attributed the cessations of their daily ride to Frederica's displeasure at her interference in the Elbany affair. Engrossed just then by important business of her own, she had no leisure to offer the necessary explanations. But having occasion to call in Charles-street, was quite satisfied with Lady Launceston's repetition of what she had heard from her son, that "Fred. had caught a slight cold at Calder House, and was nursing it for the Waddlestone breakfast;" without attempting to soothe down the resentment of her cousin Brooke's indignant wife.

Great therefore was her amazement and distress when, on the third day following the masque, the first tidings of the affair reached her from the pen of Sophronia of Twickenham. Lady Twadell, restless to display her new emblazonments, having joined in unharmonious union her Woodington pair of bays to the Viscount's pair of blacks, and converted her second coachman and his lordship's second footman into lumbering postilions, was making the tour of the suburbs in what she considered an imposing degree of bridal splendour; and after trying the cold chicken and sandwiches of Wimbledon and Roehampton, had thought fit to travel as far as Lady Derenzy's villa, in order to improve her edition of Lady Rawleigh's adventures. Unluckily, Sophronia had not a word to add in the way of annotation. Her latest intelligence of her niece had been derived from Lord George Madrigal, who in his account of Lord Calder's fête had represented Frederica as

"The obtherved of all obtherverth;"

and from Lady Lavinia Lisle, who asserted her to have been the ruling planet of the evening. Having loftily reproved the tittle-tattle of the little Viscountess, whom she abhorred as a *parvenue*, Lady Derenzy followed up her lecture by inflicting an epistle of two sheets and an envelope, upon her quondam pupil, Lady Sophia; containing certain sentences of the description called rigmarole, which involved the "dignity of the order,—the purity of the sex.—

the spotlessness of the female character,—the folly of women who commit themselves by writing letters, and the imperative necessity of hanging all footmen who open them."

The Rosetta stone could not have been more unintelligible to Lady Sophia! Her first impulse was to fly to Bruton-street, and demand a key to the hieroglyphics; and she was speedily rewarded for her reliance on the innocence of her friend, by the fervour with which the still-agitated Frederica threw herself into her arms, and relieved her heart and mind by relating every particular of the affair.

Lady Sophia was instantly satisfied. But aware that the world would not be so readily convinced, she was anxious, without wounding the feelings of Lady Rawleigh, to exercise such an influence over her conduct towards Lord Calder, as would restrain her from all public demonstrations of gratitude towards him, as well as from all evidence of private pique.

"Could you have imagined," cried Frederica, on the conclusion of her narrative, "that Lord Calder would lay aside his apathy and selfishness, and exert himself with such promptitude in favour of a servant?"

"To forward his own ends, he would have taken as much trouble for a turnspit. Be careful, dearest Fred., be careful that he is not too amply rewarded for the effort."

"Do not alarm yourself.—Rawleigh, who sees all his actions in the worst light, has made it a point that our acquaintance should terminate as soon as possible,—Dynley, or Lexley, or Indice, or some other of his club-associates, have been careful to instil into his mind a belief that his dignity and authority as a husband, depend on his excluding Lord Calder from our house."

"That would be more injudicious than our civility. I shall take care that he is guilty of no such folly."

"I fear, dear Lady Sophia, your influence will scarcely suffice to work such a miracle."

"*My* influence?—No. You shall have a much more potent auxiliary. I shall obtain the interference of a person who has the greatest weight with Sir Brooke; one who will not allow him to trifle with your happiness and his own."

Frederica started.—There was no mistaking the inference. Miss Elbany's influence over her husband was to be propitiated in her favour.—Her spirit recoiled from such a degradation.

"Thank you!—I have no doubt you mean to act kindly by me," said she, with sudden coldness. "But when a woman requires the aid of a partisan to mediate between herself and her husband, her cause is naught!"

"What a jealous little soul it is!" said Lady Sophia, who, preparing for departure, approached to pat her cheek with a most provoking air of superiority. "Wont it accept the assistance of such a shabby piece of goods as its mamma's companion?—Wont it receive a favour from its brother's idol,—from its future sister-in-law?"

"Miss Elbany *my* sister-in-law?" cried Frederica. "Never!"

"As sure as you are in a violent rage at this very moment."

"Do you—can you—mean to say that you anticipate such disgrace for Launceston and his family, as the triumph of that artful adventurer?"

"I mean to say that I, at least, will leave no measure unattempted to secure the event!—Good bye. I leave you to your indignation, and the perusal of yonder triangular billet. Preserve me from the nonsense which requires pink paper to make it palatable."

She hastened away as she uttered these words; and if anything could tend to augment the vexation they excited in the mind of Lady Rawleigh, it would have been the perusal of the following lines:

"Brook-street, July—1829.

"DEAR LADY RAWLEIGH,

"An unpleasant report having reached me that a sum of money forwarded to you by our friend Lord Calder has fallen into your husband's hands, or been stolen by one of your servants, I am apprehensive that it may have some reference to the demand I made on you the other evening. I trust you will excuse me for reminding you that I am responsible for the amount, and that I must therefore beg you to make some arrangements with Sir Brooke on the subject, as soon as possible.

I am, dear Lady Rawleigh,
Truly yours,
L. ERSKYNE."

Fortunately for Frederica, Martin had already announced that the bearer of this gracious epistle did not wait for an answer. But as she paced the room for the better consideration of her finances, how grieved, how debased in her own eyes, how harassed in mind, body and estate did the spendthrift feel amid her self-rebukings!—She, who had so often condemned the wisdom of the worldly, the petty avarice of the narrow-minded, the base propensities of the interested, what penalty would she not have endured, what sacrifice would she not have made to obtain a few hundred pounds.

After feverishly revolving the difficulties of the case, she resolved to address a private letter to Obadiah Ruggs, requesting him to

advance the sum of one hundred pounds, which would become due to her in the course of ten days; and apply to her mother for a loan of the remaining sixty-five, immediately in request. She trusted the statuary would be satisfied with her promise of payment in November, and that no extraordinary demands would arise upon her pocket-money. She, who had never in her life experienced a deficiency of this description, flattered herself that she should be able to get through *three* months without a single guinea. She,

Whose kindly-melting heart,
To every want, to every woe,—
To guilt itself, when in distress,—
The balm of pity would impart,
And all relief that bounty can bestow.

fancied she could close her ears against the murmurs and grievances of the rheumatic dames and paralytic gaffers, her pensioners in the green lanes and scattered hovels of her own dear Rawleighford: little imagining that her keeper of the privy purse had already a list of unpaid items, for ribbons, needles, and all the contemptible nothings of the lady's-maid's department, to the amount of twenty pounds; and that her standing bills,—but it is needless to anticipate.

Lord Launceston and Sir Brooke, meanwhile, had exacted a promise that she would pass the evening in Charles-street to satisfy the anxieties of the dowager touching her cold; and Lady Launceston, with all her medical skill, might be excused for giving full faith to the supposititious malady, when she looked in Frederica's face and noticed the havoc that four days of anxiety had wrought in its expression. So haggard were her looks, her eyes so lustreless, her voice so tremulous, that her mother was almost tempted to inquire whether she had been rash enough to hold any further intercourse, through Lady Olivia, with Captain Mopsley and the good ship the Scarmouth Castle.

On this point, her ladyship's fears were readily obviated. Scarcely were they seated for the evening,—Sir Brooke and Launceston paired off on one sofa, and Frederica seated on the other beside the invalid, listening to a history of a dispute between Chloe and the housekeeper's cat,—when a rustling on the stairs announced a visitor, and in bustled Lady Olivia, with her country neighbours the Misses Peewit. The gentlemen exchanged certain impolite aspirations for their transfer to some unrecordable spot,—and Lady Rawleigh silently wished them in a better place. But poor Lady Launceston had a gracious word and smile for all her visitors, and sympathised kindly in the motive of these Essex

worthies for visiting the metropolis. For in spite of Lady Olivia's gift of green spectacles, Miss Peewit was come to consult an oculist, and Miss Maria was bent on a private audience with Cartwright.

" You see, my dear," said Lady Olivia to her niece, as soon as her friends had afforded these interesting explanations with their hostess, " I really did not know what to do with them, or you would not have seen me here to-night. I could not take them with me to old Lady Buntingford's, where I was engaged to a *conversazione*; because they have no pretensions to blue-ism, and it happens not to be one of her Saints'-days. I wrote a note to Lord Calder, to ask him for his box at the English Opera, but Mrs. Erskyne had been beforehand with me; and it was out of the question remaining at home, for my house is prepared for my departure from town; every room papered up, except my own dressing-room. So I persuaded them I was pre-engaged to my sister."

" Mamma is very glad to see them; particularly as they come on an errand of health," replied Frederica, listlessly.

" I wish she would take it into her head to ask them to dine with her to-morrow," said the calculating Lady Olivia; " for what to do with them I know not. I am engaged to the breakfast and concert at Waddlestone House; and now that Mrs. Woodington is married, I have no convenient friend on whom I can quarter them. I have provided for their morning's amusement by getting an order for Lord Calder's picture-gallery; but as to the dinner part of the business I am completely puzzled."

" What is this history of Lady Twadell's," inquired Frederica, anxious to evade the detail of her ladyship's shabby manœuvres, " relative to my uncle Trevelyan's arrival in England? Do you imagine that he has heard of Launceston's engagement to Miss Waddlestone, and wishes for an explanation?"

" Lady Twadell is a gossiping, officious little woman," said Lady Olivia, angrily. " She is so vexed that her own designs on my nephew proved abortive, that she cannot resist circulating these mischievous inventions."

" She is only responsible for announcing the fact; the motive was suggested by myself. But surely my uncle or Mary would have written to announce their arrival?"

" Your uncle and Mary are beyond my comprehension, or that of any reasonable being. To say the truth, Frederica, I have great reason to complain of both. After my father's death, I had a nine-years' chancery suit with Trevelyan; and though it was given against me, with costs, no person has ever doubted that I wa-

scandalously used. My brother, however, has thought proper to make my perseverance the excuse for a personal quarrel; while your father amused himself by calling me the Widow Blackacre."

"But all that affair has been long ended and forgotten," said Lady Rawleigh, anticipating the too well-known history of that terrible chancery suit.

"Not at all, my dear, not at all! Trevelyan has taken care to avoid me, ever since. Though we were in Italy together, thirteen months, he always managed to cross me on the road; to be in Sicily when I was at Naples; at Pisa when I was at Rome. Lady Mary, it is true, keeps up a formal correspondence with me. But I have never seen my niece since she was eight years old. Well, Fred., you will be the better for it! Since Lord Trevelyan and his daughter choose to make a stranger of me, they will find that—but, my dear love, I have never seen you since the termination of that abominable transaction concerning Thomas Cuthbert. Was there ever anything so unfortunate as your omitting to endorse the bill? Let it be a warning to you another time. If you had only written your name on the back, there is not the smallest doubt that you might have hanged the fellow."

"Hush, my dear aunt," faltered Lady Rawleigh; "I would not for worlds have mamma distressed by hearing a word on the subject."

"Oh! you have nothing to fear. She is absorbed in Clara Peewit's account of a face-ache she caught in the hard winter of 1826. Hark! they are busy with the embrocation. Well, my love, as I was saying, Mr. Marwill assures me that had you only endorsed the bill, Cuthbert was a lost man. I own I think it a scandalous thing that such a villain should escape. A footman who opens a confidential letter! Which of us is safe? It might be my case, you know, to-morrow; and I have considered it my duty to address a letter to the Attorney-General, inquiring whether there is no law to which he might still be made amenable."

"Oh! my dear aunt!"

"And Marwill has drawn up the case for *counsel's* opinion. I must say I think it was rather officious on Lord Calder's part, to act in the business without consulting any of the family: and the first time I see him, I shall certainly hint my opinion that (as I acted as your personal adviser on the occasion) he might as well have paid me the compliment of ascertaining my views."

"Let me implore you to let the subject drop. Promise me, my dear aunt, that—"

"There is one point, too, on which I must expostulate with Sir Brooke," interrupted Lady Olivia. "Before he left the office, I

saw him present Lord Calder with a cheque for two hundred and eighty pounds. Now though the two hundred pound bank-bill is still in your husband's possession, and available, the eighty pounds in notes is gone and spent. And if he chooses to prosecute Cuthbert for a breach of trust, he would not only have a chance of recovering the money, but be enabled to transport the wretch for life; or perhaps—who knows—to hang him after all!—I *must* have a little conversation with Sir Brooke Rawleigh."

"If you love me, my dear aunt, do not utter another syllable on the subject; which is a most distressing one both to my husband and myself."

Frederica's cheeks became flushed with the deepest crimson, at this further discovery of pecuniary involvement. She had hitherto overlooked the circumstance of the deficit of eighty pounds, and had every reason to apprehend that Sir Brooke, in his business-like view of the case, intended to apply the next quarter of her pin money to its reimbursement!

Here then was an end of her hopes of the hundred pounds to be advanced by Obadiah Ruggs!—

CHAPTER XXXVII.

No common coxcomb must be mentioned here,
Nor the dull train of dancing sparks appear!
Nor fluttering officers who never fight;—
Of such a wretched rabble who would write?

SHEFFIELD, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

HUNGER, cold, and nakedness, may be terrible to bear, but the pauperism of high life is not without its agony; and whatever may be said in favour of the luxury of woe, the woes of luxury are by no means less acute than those of humbler life. There is a sentiment of personal shame connected with the destitution of fine ladies and fine gentlemen. It is such a manifest self-accusation to plead poverty in excuse for the delayed payment of a bill, that the eye quails and the voice falters in making the avowal.—"Inconvenient at the present moment,"—"disappointment in my rents,"—"unexpected calls on my ready money,"—are pretty generally recognised as the lame apologies of unjustifiable prodigality!

But Frederica Rawleigh was more than commonly sensitive to the dishonour of such proceedings. Educated by a mother who, notwithstanding the seeming indolence and listlessness of her mode of life, maintained the strictest regularity in her domestic affairs, and in spite of her seeming inanity of mind, fulfilled with righteous

diligence every duty of her sex, she had been wholly unused to the sight of disorder, or the anxieties of pecuniary embarrassment. She had never, it is true, been dinned with lectures on extravagance; but had received a still better lesson in the orderly simplicity of Lady Launceston's habits. And she was consequently inexcusable, and sought not to excuse herself.

On arriving at home, after her unsatisfactory explanation with Lady Olivia, she found three wafered letters lying on the hall-table, bearing her superscription flourished in all the suspicious perfection of the clerky art. At any other time, they would have been mechanically opened and thrown aside; but now, a cold dew moistened her brow as the horrors of an unpayable bill first occurred to her mind: and she not only conveyed them unexamined as far as her dressing-room, but waited to be relieved from Mrs. Pasley's inquisition, before she ventured to unclose the dreaded page for the perusal of those tremendous perpendicular columns, marshalled in the fatal array of red ink, and dated with accurate and insulting minuteness, which show more terrible to the eye of the prodigal than the columns of the British forces to the imperial fugitive of Waterloo.

On the present occasion, Lady Rawleigh's alarms were superfluous.—The first of these wafered envelopes contained a lithographic address from a ready-money tailor, setting forth peculiar inducements of thrift in the purchase of livery-coats and velveteens; the second was a satin paper circular from a fashionable library, professing to circulate all the new works on the day of publication, or, in other words, to supply three hundred copies of every idle novel to its three hundred grateful subscribers; while the third contained a card from Messrs. Stubble and Bubble, hosiers, drapers, silk-mercers, and haberdashers, thanking her ladyship for the liberality of her past favours, (which she had very unwittingly bestowed,) and soliciting her further attention to their new stock, on their new premises, 16, William-street, Clerkenwell; a locale with which she was very unlikely to become acquainted, unless by accidental participation of some of Lady Olivia's obliqueitous travels through the metropolis.

Frederica flung aside these mockeries of her distress, debased in spirit by the perturbation they had so innocently occasioned.—But that perturbation, and the reflections to which it gave rise, sufficed to destroy her rest. Her pillow had acquired the disquieting uneasiness inseparable from a troubled spirit. She felt that a crisis was at hand: that she must either endure the prolonged mortification of pecuniary involvement, or the still sharper pang of degrading herself in the eyes of those she loved, of those who loved

her, by an acknowledgment of her weakness, and an appeal to their indulgence. "Oh! that horrible pin money!" murmured she, in the restlessness of her reflections. "Had I found it necessary to have recourse to Rawleigh for the detailed payment of my debts,—had full and entire confidence been established between us in the defrayment of my personal expenses,—never, never shold I have plunged into the excesses which embitter a destiny so especially blest by Providence!"

Meanwhile Lord Launceston had turned a deaf ear to his sister's representation of her disinclination to appear at the Waddlestone House breakfast. More intimately acquainted than herself with the calumnies both circulated and believed relative to her recent adventure, he was aware of the necessity that she should at once confront the world,—supported by the countenance of her husband and brother, and sanctioned by the companionship of her female friends. He had little indulgence for the morbid sensibilities of the female heart;—for aromatic vinegar or salts, — hysterics or fainting-fits;—his sympathy in these interesting crises having long been blunted by the valetudinarian habits of Charlem-street, and by seeing his mother survive the daily deaths of five-and-twenty years.

It was therefore settled that Frederica should make her appearance at Kensington Gore, with as much of her usual cheerfulness and beauty as could be artificially assumed. Launceston had already presented her with a beautiful dress, and having settled to accompany his sister, Sir Brooke, and Lady Sophia, on so interesting an occasion, he made his appearance in Bruton-street, in the highest spirits;—complimented his sister on the delicacy of her complexion, and himself on the elegance of her costume;—and laughed and talked with exuberant gaiety. But a more penetrating eye or less pre-occupied mind than that of Lady Rawleigh, might have discerned a sort of unnatural flurry in all this animation: a lurking anxiety lest he should be deficient in his part,—a hollow echo in his laugh.

Alas! how rarely amid the scenes of polished life are the surface and substance identical. How seldom does the word on the lip, or the expression of the eye, accord with the feelings labouring within! Lord Launceston, in spite of his buoyant mirth, was enduring the bitter consciousness of the stigma on his sister's reputation; and the no less painful knowledge of his own hypocrisy in appearing publicly at Waddlestone House as the privileged lover of Leonora, while his thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears, were centered in the obscure Lucy Elbany.

Never were four persons less joyously inclined than those who

proceeded along the Knightsbridge-road. Frederica's spirit was heavy with the oppression of her debts, Sir Brooke's with that of her indiscretions. Lord Launceston felt that he was about to practise an unworthy deception, and Lady Sophia was intent on analyzing and detecting the real and relative sentiments of her companions. Her task, indeed, was somewhat less painful than theirs:—but if it did not render her sad, it made her grave. Nothing could be less in harmony with the brilliant and prosperous aspect of Waddlestane House.

It may be observed as a general rule, that even in a sumptuous mansion, supported by the best establishment, loftiest fortune, and most illustrious connexions, a great crowd is incompatible with perfect refinement. A grand entertainment cannot be effected without a crowd. A magnificent suite of rooms, interspersed with scattered groups, however radiant in themselves, assumes a character of dulness. And even the fastidious Calder had judged it necessary to assemble the mob of fashion, in order to give effect to his Faëry masque. But in unclosing for this single occasion the adamantine gates of his enchanted hall, he had found it impossible to prevent the intrusion of many unwelcome guests; the old—the disagreeable—the ill-dressed—and the ill-looking.

But a morning demands very different arrangements. A daylight crowd is absolutely repugnant to the eye. The flushed cheek and crushed dress, the moistened brow and angry glance kindled by the consciousness of such distemperature, assume a most offensive reality when viewed through the medium of summer sunshine; and however rural the character of the entertainment,—however beautiful the groves and parterres, however elastic the velvet turf, however glassy the waters and gay the galleys, however shady the groves or serpentine the shrubberies, destined to allure and disperse the lovely visitants,—the hour of refreshment infallibly reunites them into a gregarious mass; when the marquee or banqueting room is fated to display “the many-headed (and many-mouthing) monster-thing” in more than ordinary unsightliness.

Long observation of these circumstances had induced Mr. W. to limit his number of guests to a hundred;—twenty of them being distinguished foreigners, invited by the Princesse de Guéménée,—twenty, filtered from the elect of fashion by the Duchess of Whitehaven,—twenty more from what Lord Calder was pleased to call the ancient Druids, by Lady Wroxwerth;—while the remaining forty were chosen by Leonora and her mother from her youngest, fairest, and most elegant friends, and by the host from the world of letters and of art. In venturing on so exclusive a limitation, Mr. W. was more justifiable than any other person of similar

station. He had attained his opulence without incurring obligations to a single individual besides his wife, who, for his consolation, was the solitary scion of a scanty race; and he had selected his intimates among those whose habits of life produce the polished surface of high-breeding, whose mental culture and exemption from peremptory occupation qualify their minds for the enjoyment of literature and the fine arts.

The Rawleighs and Lady Sophia, aware of Mr. Waddlestone's refusal to join the party at Calder House, had not contemplated the possibility of meeting Lady Rochester at Kensington Gore. But the first person pointed out by Lord Launceston to his sister on entering the saloon was Lord Calder, exhibiting his most attractive demeanour, and engaged in conversation with Sir Thomas Lawrence and a man of high eminence in the literary world.

"Strange!" whispered Frederica to her companion. "I should have imagined him too proud to accept the hospitalities of a person who declines his own!"

"Little dunce,—such is the very motive of his appearance here. Lord Calder's pride prompts him to the condescension of visiting Mr. Waddlestone; because Mr. Waddlestone's pride—in a different form,—suggested refusal of his courtesies. We are all blockheads, under various disguises."

"Launceston, my dear fellow!" cried the Duke of Draxfield, accosting them, "after all your ill-nature, you see I have made good my entrance."

"What bribe did you offer the Princess for your ticket?"

"I effected my entrance through the family foible of my aunt Wroxworth, to whom I addressed a billet-doux, sealed with a family escutcheon, large enough for the Lord Chancellor's signet, which roused all her dormant wivern-and-gules sympathies.

"And the soapboiler has done very wisely in unsealing his sanctuary," added the Duke; "I never saw anything more exquisite than the house with all that it contains and all that it inherits. My grandmother, the dowager duchess, who fancies the arts are attainable only through the Herald's College, would die of indignation, were she to behold the agate chalices and Cellini goblets in yonder cabinet. As to the pictures, Calder declares there is not a villa in Rome which could display such a string of gems."

"Probably," said Frederica, carelessly, "because they have been expressly selected from those despoiled sanctuaries."

"But do let us a little into the secret, Launceston!" persisted the Duke of Draxfield. "By what magical clue did you originally find your way into this labyrinth of wonders? If it were not for our mother-in-law,—the monster who guards the golden fruit,—

I would gladly exchange Draxfield Court and all my old-fashioned lumber, living and dead,—ay! even the Dowager Duchess and Zinganee's two colts, for your soap-boilery!"

"If you say another word on the subject," said Lord Launceston, his natural levity breaking through his temporary depression, "I will buy up all your mortgages, and eject you from Draxfield at once. And if you dare to affront my mother-in-law, take my word for it, Master Shallow, I will never pay you the thousand pounds I owe you."

"As Midas sings, 'I take your word? I would not take your bond, sir.' But see, we have the room to ourselves. Every one has disappeared through the conservatory. Let us for once follow the multitude. For there is a beautiful little theatre opening towards the lawn; and I espied Mori, Spagnoletti, Wilman, and Dragonetti, in the orchestra, who told me that Pasta, Malibran, and Donzelli were engaged."

"An opera?" inquired Frederica. "I hope it is something new. In July, one grows tired of Mozart and Rossini."

"Nothing so common-place, believe me. The *élite* of the Italian, French, and English companies are to give historical tableaux. The Kembles have undertaken Henry VIII.;—Charles V. at the court of Francis will follow—Madame Albert taking the part of the Duchesse de Valentinois;—and lastly, we are to have *Œdipus*, represented by the queenly Giuditta. Lawrence, who was present at the rehearsal, declares it is the best thing of the kind that has ever been attempted in this country."

"And intended, I have little doubt, as a satire on that treble-refined blunder at Calder House," said Lord Launceston.

"Amateur performances are always bad," said the Duke, leading the way to the conservatory. "And yet they amuse one by their very deficiencies. But what a pity that the Dynleys and Erskynes should not be here to profit by the contrast. Your father-in-law, Launceston, prohibited little Erskyne,—probably as a dangerous companion for his daughter;—and Dynley, I suspect, as being what we all find him, an impertinent jackanapes."

They were now within the folding doors of a beautiful little theatre of Palladian architecture; in which the audience were involved in obscurity—while a strong light was projected upon the stage from moveable skylights above, at the will and judgment of the performers. The effect thus produced on the grouping of the tableaux, was superior to that of any artificial illumination; and Lady Rawleigh, on seating herself near the entrance, was too much struck by the admirable impersonation of Harlow's picture of Wolssey and Katherine, by the Kemble family, which was just then in

the act of representation, to utter a syllable. It was not till the gradual descent of the curtain closed the scene, that a general murmur of admiration rose from the spectators.

Amid the general plaudits of the spectators, and the rhapsodies, Frederica cast her eyes round the theatre, and detected through its misty shade the most distinguished members of the great world; and all in raptures. Had their entertainment been provided in royal halls, instead of those of a notorious soapboiler, they could not have been more unreservedly gratified. But the spectacle most surprising to Frederica after the fall of the olive velvet curtain, was that of Lord Calder quietly seated between her husband and Lady Sophia Lee, who had left the saloon together, some minutes before Launceston and herself, engaged in friendly conversation, and apparently without any solicitude concerning herself or her movements. Lord Calder, whose glass was occasionally bent round the theatre, at length descried her, and bowed with his usual courtesy; but immediately resumed his discourse with Sir Brooke Rawleigh. In the pauses which occurred between the tableaux, filled up by exquisite symphonies which would have suspended the breath of an audience at the Philharmonic, but which being heard elsewhere were scarcely heard amid the buzz of general conversation, the gentlemen of the party changed their places;—wandered from bench to bench—from group to group. But Lord Calder remained fixed; engrossed by the charms of Sir Brooke Rawleigh's conversation, and enjoying with a plausible air of edification the rational dialogue of Lady Sophia. Under the weight of the heaviest prose kneaded together by the honourable member for Martwich, he neither "shifted his trumpet, nor even took snuff;"—but encountered common-place with common-place;—answered the most jejune observations by comments equally trite;—and calmly descended to the level of a sluggish monotony of mind. Yet so well versed was his lordship in the art of simulation, that few persons would have conceived him to be otherwise than honestly absorbed by the eloquence of his companions.

Lord Launceston, however, no sooner turned his eyes towards the scene, than he detected its histrionic nature. But he was now warmly disposed in Lord Calder's favour; and instead of conjecturing that his efforts were directed towards the propitiation of Lady Rawleigh's husband and friend, in order to secure access to her society, gave credit to his new friend for solicitude to remove in the eyes of the world all stigma from the reputation of an innocent woman, by exhibiting himself, in contradiction to every malicious report, as the familiar associate of her husband, secretly "asking him for his amiable motives, and judicious proceedings,

Lord Launceston was charmed to observe that during the hour devoted to a succession of tableaux,—some embodying a well-known picture,—others in the German fashion, representing episodes of some romantic ballad, recited in the foreground by a professional minstrel,—the prudent Calder never deserted his post.

The tableaux were concluded by Rubens' magnificent "Marriage Ceremony of Henri IV.," represented by the whole corps dramatique; and immediately afterwards, the guests, wearied by the over-excitement of so novel a scene, gradually dispersed among the shrubberies, or where the deep shade of the trellises and espaliers of orange trees secured them from the sunshine.

"All this is admirable!" observed Lord Calder to Mr. Vaux, stopping short as they approached a copy of Bernini's Atalanta, placed in beautiful relief among the darkest recesses of the grove. "It almost puts one out of conceit with the arts, to find them fostered with such feeling and judgment by a *soapboiler*! So far from being able to determine

What wants this knave
That a lord should have,

I could suggest nothing more luxurious for my own dainty fastidiousness, than the existence he has created. On my soul, Vaux, were I, like yourself, a marrying man——"

"I a marrying man? You wrong me."

"I would have forestalled that hand-over-head blockhead, young Launceston, and appropriated to myself and my heirs these groves and their Dryad. 'Tis the prettiest little creature,—fair as the blossom of some delicate exotic!"

"But you forget that *I* have no gilt bauble with four balls to tender on a crimson cushion in exchange for her treasures?"

"You have tact and knowledge of the world; a match, any day, against the bull-headed candour of a boy like Launceston. Twenty years hence he may become worth speaking too. But at present, admire his folly in allowing his good-looking friend, Colonel Rhyse, to beast his sylvan divinity! I saw them, just now, whispering together in the marble temple among the tulip-trees, while he mounted guard over my fair Frederica. Aha! a gong! Let the *chef* be only half as good as the stage-manager, and the summons need not be repeated."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Let us try whether these fatal dissensions may not yet be reconciled; or if that be impracticable, let us guard at least against the worst effects of division, and endeavour to persuade these furious partisans, if they will not consent to draw together, to be separately useful to that cause to which they all pretend to be attached.—JUNIUS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the partiality of Lady Rawleigh for Mr. Waddlestone's society, and her admiration of the gentleness of his address and refinement of his mind, she passed an uneasy half-hour while escorted by him through his beautiful gardens. While standing with her brother and the Prince de Guéménée in contemplation of a fountain, formed by a basket of interlaced *jets d'eau*, apparently supported on the celebrated Ibis pedestal from Adrian's villa, she had been approached by her host with a courteous expression of envy of a far more beautiful fountain, a certain water-lily, with which he had been enchanted at his statuary's the previous day.

“It was on the point of being packed for Rawleighford Park,” observed Mr. W. “Had the treasure been destined for any other spot, I should have been tempted to offer a bribe of a hundred guineas, in order to make it my own without delay.”

This reference to one of the objects of her financial difficulties, sufficed to gather a cloud on Lady Rawleigh's brow. But whence arose that which overspread the countenance of her brother? Was it that Mr. Waddlestone's presence oppressed him with a consciousness of his unworthy position in the family? Was it that he feared the scrutinizing eye of a parent might penetrate the treacherous secret lurking in his bosom? His air and speech became flurried, when he attempted to enter into conversation with his future father-in-law.

He began, in a hurried manner, to inquire after Mrs. Waddlestone.

Surprised by his embarrassment, but attributing his young friend's discomposure to the necessity of bestowing those attentions on his sister which he was eager to offer to his beloved Leonora, Mr. W. replied with a smile, “My wife is scarcely obliged to you for the tardiness of your inquiries. You ought to have known, two hours ago, that she was confined to the sofa in the tent-room by a sprained ankle. Do not look so disturbed. She will be good enough to give you credit for proper sympathy on so grave an occasion; and as she is perfectly contented in Lady Wroxworth's company, who kindly devotes herself to her for the morning, instead of flying to make your inquiries, you had better find your way to Leonora, who is with Prince Albert and

Colonel Rhyse in the music-room. Lady Rawleigh will perhaps honour me by accepting my escort, during your absence."

Half the hint would have been sufficient for Lord Launceston. Delighted to escape on any terms, he resigned his sister to Mr. Waddlestone's arm, and hurried away.

" You must forgive me," resumed Mr. W., as soon as they were out of sight, " for venturing to offer my unworthy self as Lord Launceston's substitute. But I am not yet so old as to have forgotten the tediousness of a day passed within sight of those we love, without the power of communication. My poor girl has been looking so harassed and unhappy all the morning, that I could not but take pity on her."

" Miss Waddlestone is very good—*too* good—in affixing importance to my brother's absence or presence," said Frederica, indignant at Launceston's disingenuous proceedings; " for her own are warmly prized by many more deserving her attention."

" Pardon me," said Mr. W., surprised by this unhandsome allusion on the part of one whom he had been taught to believe as affectionate a sister, as she was amiable and ingratiating. " I cannot allow you to disparage Lord Launceston. Among the young men of the day, I know none worthy to compare with him in candour of disposition, or nobleness of character."

Lady Rawleigh blushed deeply as she listened to this ill-timed eulogy, and secretly resolved to insist, in her first private interview with her brother, that Mr. Waddlestone and his daughter should be no longer duped by his false pretences.

" Perhaps you may consider me premature," continued her companion, " in referring to an engagement which I trust will, at no distant time, privilege me to address you with more intimate confidence. But you must forgive a father devoted to the welfare and happiness of an only daughter—(his voice grew husky as he spoke)—for saying that were Lord Launceston's pecuniary involvements twice as heavy, twice as notorious, as I find them to be, they would be amply compensated by the worthiness of his disposition, and the excellence of the mother and sister he will bestow upon my girl. His equals—his *superiors* in rank, Lady Rawleigh, have sought her at my hands; and even among those least qualified to appreciate her merits, Leonora's beauty and dowry have secured, and might still secure, many an illustrious aspirant to her hand. But there is not one—not one—besides himself, to whom I could intrust without anxiety the care of a temper so gentle, the guardianship of a spirit so spotless!"

Mr. Waddlestone was too much affected to notice the consternation of poor Frederica, who heard, in these outpourings of parental

tenderness, renewed accusations against her thoughtless brother. Very sincerely did she wish that Miss Elbany had never been tempted to quit the "pleasant little village of Wansfield" in search of a genteel independence. But though she did not venture to utter a syllable, Mr. W. fancied he could read in her silence her sympathy with his feelings.

"I have no longer any apprehension," said he, "that the attachment will prove, on either side, a momentary predilection. It is now nearly a year since Horace Rhyse first brought his friend to dine at our Marino; and, with the exception of a few winter months passed by your brother at Rawleighford, and by Leonora at Brighton, they have scarcely been separated a day. Even then, the daily visits of Colonel Rhyse, who was in close correspondence with his friend Launceston, sufficed to turn poor Leonora's cheeks to crimson whenever he was announced. In fact, I am now so satisfied of the steadiness and strength of their mutual affection, that I have come to a determination——"

"My dear Mr. Waddlestone!—My dearest Fred!" wheezed a panting voice behind, "take pity on my exhausted lungs. I have been puffing after you these ten minutes! But you were so deeply engaged, that I could not attract your attention. Oh! my dear Frederica!" continued Lady Olivia Tadeaster, coming up with them, and unceremoniously seizing the gentleman's disengaged arm. "Such a vexatious morning as I have had!—Everything contrary—everything perplexing! You know, my dear, I told you I had promised to lend my carriage and horses to the Peewits, to go first to the oculist's, and afterwards to Calder House, when they were to send it back for me, while they were viewing the gallery. Then, having brought me here, it was to take them to dinner in Charles-street:—then return to fetch me;—then, call to bring them home. Nothing could have been better arranged!"

"Severe duty for your horses," said Mr. Waddlestone, feeling that some comment was expected by this eruditè professor of the art of ingeniously tormenting.

"Oh! they are only jobs! No one has any scruples about working job horses. Well, my dear Fred., I was full dressed by two o'clock —(you know I hate to be behindhand)—and from half-past, I began to be on the look out for the carriage. But all in vain. First, I had the mortification to see Lord Calder's four bays go sweeping by, with Lady Rochester; and the Duchess of Whitehaven passed my door before half-past three, evidently en her way to Kensington Gore. But no signs of my poor unfortunate chariot!—I was quite in despair. I knew the *tableaux* were to begin at four; and have not been gratified by seeing anything of the kind since I was

staying, eight years ago, at Nymphenburg, with my old friend the present Queen Dowager of Bavaria. I really could not make up my mind to submit patiently to the deprivation. So I sent a little civil note to Lady Twadell, begging the favour of her equipage (I called it *equipage* to gratify her silly vulgar pride) to convey me to the *fête*. But the poor soul has been so mortified by finding herself excluded, that she had the assurance to write me word her coachman was dying of a quinsy ; though she is well aware that I meet her every day, in both the parks, and on all the roads round London, with postillions. I have no notion of such airs ! I consider Lady Twadell a very ungrateful little woman. It is astonishing what pains it cost me to get her into good society, when I was trying to secure her jointure for my nephew."

"And how did you manage to get here at last?" said Lady Rawleigh, unwilling that her aunt's shabby manœuvres should be still further exposed to Mr. Waddlestone.

"My dear, I sent to half a dozen people. But every one of them was off. The reputation of our good friend's excellent table had induced all the latest of the late to set out full an hour earlier than usual. And then, not exactly knowing the *carte du pays*, I made two or three such unlucky blunders. I wrote to Lady Barbara Dynley for a seat in her phaeton ; and she, taking it for a premeditated affront (for it seems every one knows that she was refused a card), sent me a verbal answer that she was not going to Waddlestone House, being engaged to dine at Mother Red Cap's with the Chandler's Company. Then, I had a very ungracious answer from Lady Margaret Fieldham about her mother's barouche. But would you believe that when I stepped over to inquire whether your little friend, Mrs. William Erskyne, could accommodate me, she had the impertinence to reply that *she* never—but I really beg your pardon, Mr. Waddlestone," said Lady Olivia, suddenly checking herself, as she became conscious of his presence, "I beg your pardon for repeating these insolent flippancies. The annoyance of having lost your *tableaux* makes me forget everything."

"And the Miss Peewits?" inquired Frederica, to fill up this awkward pause. "Had any accident occurred,—or were they only negligent?"

"My dear Frederica, I was in a perfect state of agony. I sent John to Mr. Alexander's—they had been there to consult him and were gone. I despatched a second servant to Calder House,—neither they nor the carriage had made their appearance. I could no longer entertain a doubt that they must have been detained by some very serious mischance ;—perhaps the horses had run away —perhaps the carriage had broke down (for it has never been to t!

coachmaker's since I returned from Carlsbad). Or, perhaps, Clara Peewit had fallen into a fit,—for, between ourselves, she has had two attacks, as much resembling palsy as anything you ever heard of, and is as likely to go off at a moment's warning as any one I know. I was really beside myself; for I now gave up the breakfast for lost, and was beginning to fear I should be obliged to put up with a family dinner with my sister Launceston (one of her insipid sweetbread-and-spring-chicken set outs, instead of my friend's luxurious fare), when luckily I spied Camomile's carriage, stopping at old Lord Cygnet's! So away I sent my own maid, with my compliments and half-a-crown to the coachman, and 'Lady Launceston's sister would be glad to be driven as far as Grosvenor-place, while he was waiting for his master.' I thought, perhaps, I might manage to pick up, or be picked up by somebody on my way. But as ill-luck would have it, I was obliged to bring the poor man as far as this very door. However, as the coachman well knows, my sister is one of Camomile's best patients (a hundred and fifty pounds per annum without attendance, and no end to presents in venison, fruit, and coral necklaces, to the little Camomiles!) So I had no scruple in compelling the poor man to walk home, for once in a way; for it was too late, you know, for him to visit any other patients. Besides, Lord Cygnet's is one of what I call Camomile's sessions-houses. For he is not only obliged to relieve his lordship's hypochondriacism by fetching and carrying the tittle-tattle of the day for his edification; but to give up an extra half-hour afterwards, to listen to his patient's tiresome twaddle!"

There is no saying to what extent Lady Olivia's narrative might have proceeded, had not the sound of the gong suddenly suspended her nonsense, and summoned her to the dining-room; while Frederica silently followed with her kind and frank-hearted companion. She ventured a few words, indeed, in extenuation of her aunt's apparent selfishness, but Mr. Waddlestone stopped her in a moment.

"Do not apologize to *me*," said he, "for the absurdities of Lady Olivia Tadcaster. She is an old friend, who has long ranked in my mind among those who do themselves less than justice; capable of praiseworthy and generous actions, while their conversation announces them as mere egotists."

But this good-natured interpretation did not remove the weight from Lady Rawleigh's spirits. And when she found herself seated in the almost regal banqueting-room to the left of her host, who was compelled to place the Duchess of Whitehaven to his right, and beheld at the end of a glittering vista of gilt-plate her brother tying the post of honour, and dividing his homage between

Mrs. Waddlestone and her daughter, she felt heartily ashamed of his position and her own. They seemed to be sharing the guilt of a scandalous imposition on a respectable family. Half-way between the two, sat Lord Calder, still attached to Lady Sophia and Sir Brooke. But not all the delicacies successively placed before them; or the more than epicurean daintiness of the feast and brilliant flow of conversation by which it was enhanced, could efface from Lady Rawleigh's mind the remembrance of her vexations, recent, present, and approaching.

Not did the diversions that succeeded the pleasures of the table, afford a more effective charm. Vain were the concert, the improvisation, the charade; and joyfully seizing the pretext of Lady Sophia Lee's engagement to return to town and pass the evening with a friend, Lady Rawleigh's carriage was announced among the earliest departures. On their way to May Fair, Lady Sophia was fluent in expressions of amazement at the elegance and magnificence displayed in the arrangements of the day; more particularly in praise of Leonora and her loveliness; a theme on which Lady Olivia, who had manœuvred herself into the fourth seat in the carriage, left vacant by Launceston's delay, fully seconded her eloquence; while poor Rawleigh could talk of nothing but the ingratiating manners of Lord Calder.

"I always fancied him a fine gentleman. I have heard so many people complain that he was *high*, but positively I never met with a more simple, unpretending, manly fellow!"

On arriving in Piccadilly, the deluded baronet begged he might be set down near his club, while Lady R.; after depositing her two companions and learning at the door in Charles-street, whether Lady Olivia desired to be driven, that the Miss Peewits were safely arrived, (to the utter interruption of her projected explanation with her mother), proceeded home.

It was just ten o'clock when Frederica entered her cheerless drawing-room—cheerless from being prematurely closed for the evening, and filled with fading flowers; and having desired Martin to extinguish the candles, she fled from its dreariness to her own room, resolved to take shelter from herself in a long night's rest. But no sooner did she reach her dressing-table than, true as Mephistopheles to her victim, Mrs. Pasley appeared, with an air of peculiar superciliousness.

"I am not well; I am over fatigued. I think I shall go to bed," said Lady Rawleigh, unclasping one of her bracelets, and throwing it on the table.

"Indeed, my lady, you appear extremely indisposed," observed the lady's-maid; "quite *frappé en haut*, as Lord Launceston"

Swiss valet expresses it. Perhaps your ladyship is not well enough to look at these letters?" she continued, pointing to a very unsatisfactory fac-simile of the missive of Messieurs Stubble and Bubble; but the Bond-street haberdashers subjoined to the expression of their gratitude for past favours, a "small account up to the close of the season, or Midsummer half-year, which they conceived it might be agreeable to her ladyship to look over and settle previous to leaving town." "Her ladyship," as the first process of this pleasant duty, cast her eyes from the long sinuous curly-tailed £., marshalling the first column of the enemy to the awful base; "units,—tens." But let us not unveil the secrets of the sex! Suffice it that in spite of Pasley's scrutinizing presence, Frederica sank breathless into her chair.

"Another note, my lady! Mrs. William Erskyne's own maid brought it this evening, and wanted to wait for an answer till your ladyship came home, but the housekeeper would not hear of it. Reelly, ma'am, Mrs. Erskyne is so very oddly spoken of, that we are by no means anxious to make the acquaintance of any of her establishment." On receiving the billet into her trembling hands, Frederica found a ready explanation of her lady-in-waiting's impertinence; for it had been purposely left unsealed, that its insulting contents might be exposed to the curiosity of her domestics. Involuntarily, she covered her cold forehead with her hands, and faltered her commands to Mrs. Pasley that a hackney-coach should be immediately procured.

"A—a—hackney-coach?—for—for your ladyship—at—at this time of night?" cried the lady's-maid, apprehending some dreadful catastrophe.

"Desire John to call a coach, and put on your bonnet to accompany me," said Lady Rawleigh, resuming her air of authority.

"La, my lady!—Me, my lady?—Why it is near twelve o'clock. The servants in the hall will think it so very extr'ornary!"

"Let me hear nothing further of their thoughts or yours, but get ready to accompany me to Curzon-street," said her lady.

Mrs. Pasley flounced out of the room; somewhat disappointed that nothing more critical than an evening visit to Lady Sophia Lee, was about to tax her powers of professional secrecy.

On approaching the mansion of General Lee, her ladyship requested that no knock might disturb the inmates, and that John's mysterious ring at the bell might be accompanied with a request in her name to see Lady Sophia alone. Having been respectfully ushered by the gray-headed butler to a boudoir, separated by a sort of museum-corridor from the drawing-room, Frederica was not kept in suspense.

"What is the matter? You look pale and agitated. Sit down, my dearest Lady Rawleigh, and compose yourself!" said her friend, affectionately embracing her, after having carefully closed the door.

"Forgive me for disturbing you," said the culprit, in a low voice. "But I am come to ask your advice."

"Rawleigh has been tormenting you!" ejaculated Lady Sophia, who had no great predilection for her Warwickshire kinsman.

"No—I have been tormenting myself."

"You have heard, then, of these foolish reports about little Mrs. Erskyne. But in what way do they involve you? *You* did not introduce her to Lord Calder, nor are *you* responsible for her bad education and want of principle."

"I am ignorant to what you allude. My grievances are all personal—my follies all my own."

"My dear Frederica!"

"I am overwhelmed with debts, difficulties, and disgrace; and want your counsel whether to throw myself on Rawleigh's forgiveness, as my heart inclines me, or expose my weakness only to mamma and Launceston."

"You must tell me something more than this vague self-accusation, before I can decide."

"Unfortunately," resumed Lady Rawleigh, with a sigh of heaviness and contrition, "a very liberal settlement of pin money was made on me at my marriage. I was brought up in ignorance of the comparative value of money; and having never been admitted to the slightest discussion of pecuniary affairs, this unlucky four hundred a-year appeared, to my inexperience, to comprehend all the riches of the earth. More than half this infinite treasure, however, was appropriated to the disgraceful écarté business with which you are already acquainted; while the remainder has been trifled away by my improvidence, and in some degree through the undue influence of others. But no matter! I am now so deeply involved, that nothing less than four or five hundred pounds can restore me to my peace of mind. Tell me, dear Lady Sophia, dare I sufficiently rely on Rawleigh's indulgence, to acknowledge the whole truth, and claim his pardon and assistance?"

"How much did you say?" inquired Lady Sophia, musingly, while Lady Rawleigh construing her calmness into an expression of amazement and disgust, stammered forth,

"About five hundred pounds!"

"Are you sure that sum would cover the whole?" inquired her friend; while Frederica, anticipating the degradation of an offered loan, eagerly exclaimed, "You do not surely suppose that I won

accept such an obligation from any but my own family ?—I trust—I hope—you believe me incapable of having calculated on your assistance. I thought you had a better opinion of me."

To Lady Rawleigh's surprise and indignation—for her own heart was full—her companion's reply to this heroic appeal was a violent burst of laughter; which was only renewed and repeated, when she rose with great dignity, and prepared to take her departure. She could not endure the spectacle of her friend's unsympathizing mirth. But Lady Sophia, instead of apologizing for her rudeness, seized her visitor forcibly by the hand, and drew her towards the drawing-room.

"No, no ! I cannot see General Lee to-night,—I am too weary—too miserable!" exclaimed the struggling Frederica.

"General Lee is dining at Twickenham!" replied Lady Sophia, still approaching the drawing-room. "But I have a friend here who will feel very little hesitation in accommodating you with such a trifle as five hundred pounds!" And throwing open the drawing-room door with an exclamation of—"Here ! my dear, I have brought you a penitent spendthrift!" her indignant guest suddenly found herself in the presence of Miss Elbany !

"My dear Frederica!" cried the presumptuous companion, advancing with the most offensive familiarity to take her hand.

"This is too much!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, turning indignantly aside; while Lady Sophia threw herself into a chair with a renewal of her provoking merriment, and Miss Elbany encircled the recoiling waist of her victim with a tender embrace.

"My dearest Frederica ! Have you not a single kind word to say to your cousin Mary?" whispered the rejected damsel.

"Mary Trevelyan?" faltered Lady Rawleigh, with sudden consciousness.

"Mary Trevelyan; to whom you have demeaned yourself so harshly, while you were solely occupied with her eulogy and defence. My dear, dear Fred. ! Shall I ever forget the zeal with which you fought my battles with Broughley, Mrs. Woodington, and all my tribe of enemies; while I sat by, an unsuspected spectator of the fray!"

Lady Rawleigh actually trembled with delight. She saw through it all. Sir Brooke was innocent,—was an accomplice of the stratagem;—she alone had been unreasonable, unjust, jealous, absurd. But she received and returned the affectionate embrace of her beautiful cousin, and all was forgotten !

"Dismiss your hackney-coach, and come and chat comfortably with us, over our tea," said Lady Sophia, removing her bonnet. "I'd drawing her towards the sofa. "You can send back a message.

to Rawleigh by the servants, to come and fetch you on his return from the Alfred."

In a few minutes, the three fair friends were gossiping away with as much cheerful and confidential unanimity, as if their friendly union had never known interruption.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

But what is your affair in Elsinore ?
HAMLET.

"Do you remember, my dear Frederica," inquired Lady Mary Trevelyan, after numerous reminiscences of a similar nature, "how I affronted you by criticising your court-dress, in order to send you to the drawing-room with the brilliant bloom of suppressed indignation?"

"And do you recollect, my dear cousin," cried Lady Rawleigh in her turn, "how mortified I was on learning that my mother intended your portrait to be the companion of mine and Launceston's?"

"And poor dear Sir Brooke,—whom I used to comfort in his domestic tribulations, at the peril of being stilettoed by his jealous little wife."

"It was hardly fair of you," cried Frederica, blushing, "to steal this march on us, and pry into the nakedness of the land. Heaven knows what secrets you might have detected, or what family plots unravelled."

"You gave me strange encouragement to proceed, by the encomiums you bestowed on the merits of your absent cousin."

"Merits which I had not the grace to discern in Miss Elbany."

"My dear Fred. ! Your disapprobation was most appropriately bestowed. You saw me in a false position. Had I been in fact, as in seeming, the hired companion of my aunt Launceston, I should have been the worst and most presumptuous of my species. But I see you are dying to interrogate me touching the motives of my 'excellent dissembling'; and I am fully prepared to gratify you, provided you appease my curiosity by explaining the cause of your present visit?"

"Do you venture to doubt my word?" said Lady Sophia Lee.

"'Tis even as I told you. The poor child has spent all its money; and you cannot do better than secure it from the whipping it deserves, by presenting it the thousand pound cheque with which Lord Trevelyan has commissioned you to procure 'the cadeau for his dear niece and god-daughter Frederica, which he neglected'"

send on occasion of her marriage.' My life on it, she will prefer the payment of her debts to all the pearl necklaces and sapphire Sévignes, in the world."

"Here is my father's letter, with its enclosure," said Lady Mary, taking a paper from her portfolio, and tendering it to Lady Rawleigh. "Read it at your leisure, my dear cousin; that you may assure yourself I have neither exceeded my commission nor imposed on your delicacy. And now for my own manifesto; the most painful article of which is spared, inasmuch as my friend Sophia acknowledges to having already informed you of my attachment to my cousin William, and my determination to ally myself with no other human being."

"As well as of Lord Trevelyan's anxiety to shake your resolution."

"Let me still further spare your blushes, my dear Mary, and acquaint your cousin that, after being wooed by half the resident princes of Italy and wandering peers of England, and driving some into the Po, and some into the Tiber by your obduracy, you so far ceded to your father's intreaties as to promise that if, on visiting England and forming an acquaintance under a feigned name and assumed character with your recreant knight, you found him inferior in merit to your preconceived prejudice in his favour, you would return and accept the hand of whichever among your adorers he might be pleased to select for your husband."

"I had little apprehension of incurring so dreadful an alternative," said Lady Mary, her fine countenance brightened by emotion. "But, having secured my father's concurrence in this wild-goose scheme, I easily obtained my kind aunt Launceston's promise of assistance. Pining for the loss of her daughter, she was in fact delighted with the prospect of a visit from the child of a beloved brother."

"Mary had not however the wisdom to confide her plans and projects to *me*," cried Lady Sophia, "for I should have certainly opposed such a dereliction from the dignity of the sex."

"Or entrust her cousin with the secret," observed Frederica, reproachfully, "or I might have avoided a thousand discourtesies and been spared a world of painful jealousies."

"Your mother would not hear of admitting you into the conspiracy. 'My Frederica,' she said, 'is of so candid a disposition, so unused to dissembling, so warm a partisan of her cousin Mary, and above all so tenderly attached to her brother's interests, that we must not calculate upon *her* prudence on the occasion.'"

"But surely you ran great chance of recognition, from many of the visitors in Charles-street, who must have seen you in Italy;"

"One or two, I suspect, were puzzled; and terminated the difficulty by setting me down as a poor relation, or natural daughter of the Trevelyan family. But my father associates very little with the English residents on the continent. It was my inquisitive aunt Olivia who formed my chief embarrassment. Even she however had not seen me for many years, and it afforded me no little amusement, in my assumed character, to baffle her manœuvres."

"And excite the jealousy of your poor cousin," said Lady R., smiling. "You have made sad victims of us all!"

"While I was solely intent on *one*; and flatter myself not without success. William fell into the snare with far more facility than my utmost vanity could have anticipated. From the first evening of our meeting he was at my feet. Before a fortnight had elapsed, he urged me to unite my fate with his by a clandestine marriage; and had it not been for Lady Launceston's representation of his fickleness on other occasions, I might have been tempted to render his probation *too* short, by throwing aside the mask at once. It was the perplexity of not knowing how to get rid of his importunities without a premature discovery, which induced me, during your visit at Ash Bank, to take Sir Brooke Rawleigh into our counsels."

"How astonished he must have been! How ashamed of his wife! How angry with Launceston!"

"He *was* angry with Launceston; and in my opinion, more so than the case required. But Sir Brooke acknowledged he had some reason to suppose his brother-in-law entangled with another engagement; and promised to make the necessary investigation while I retired from the scene of action."

"And where did you go on that mysterious occasion?" inquired Frederica, recollecting her brother's progress through all the parishes of Sussex. "To Rawleighford, I hope."

"I ought to have told you that my father escorted me to England; and has been living in privacy at Trevelyan Castle, to wait the result of my plot. From thence, on Lady Sophia's arrival, I wrote to beg her hospitality."

"Which, with an abundance of scolding for your folly, I condescended to bestow. She has been with me these three weeks, Frederica; and on Sir Brooke's favourable report concerning the Waddlestone affair, (for he persists in believing that no engagement exists,) I ventured to indulge Mary's idle curiosity and gratify her vanity, by a sight of her rival at the *fête* at Calder House."

"Do you remember our awkward rencontre in the vestibule?" said Lady Mary. "My consternation was at its height, for the

Guéménées are old friends of mine, and I expected every moment to be recognised and addressed by them as 'Ledi Marie Triviglian,' and by Mr. Broughley as Miss Elbany. What you might be pleased to call me, Frederica, I dared not even anticipate; for believe me you looked much fiercer on the occasion than Una's lion!"

"I own I was very angry, but more with Sophia than yourself. For alas! I was better apprised than either of the serious nature of my brother's engagements in another quarter."

"No, no!" cried Lady Mary, blushing deeply. "Even had I previously doubted the strength of Launceston's attachment, the easy familiarity of his demeanour towards the queen of the fairies, on that occasion, would have convinced me that I had nothing to fear from Titania. So far from appearing embarrassed by her presence and mine, he urged me to allow him to present Miss Waddlestone, who had long been desirous of making my acquaintance."

"What audacity! What scandalous hypocrisy!" exclaimed Frederica with indignation. "Nothing can justify William's double-dealing in this affair."

Lady Mary Trevelyan, although evidently disturbed by the vehemence of her cousin, was too proud to request an explanation of her animadversions. But Lady Sophia's interest in the happiness of her friend forbade a mere point of delicacy to interfere with her clearer insight into the subject.

"My dear Frederica," said she, "we know you to be at once the true friend of your brother, and Mary's earnest partisan. Even the violence of your prejudices against Miss Elbany tended to prove the eagerness with which you were disposed to promote the union of Lord Launceston and Lady Mary Trevelyan. Tell us therefore candidly, do you differ from your husband, in your estimate of his attachments and entanglements? Have you reason to suppose him engaged to Leonora Waddlestone, and disposed to trifle with the affections of a person in Miss Elbany's apparent situation in life?"

"Not all your arguments, not all your assertions," interrupted Lady Mary with spirit, "will induce me to think so ill of him as such conduct would demand. That Launceston loves me with fervour and sincerity, is too deeply imprinted in my mind—in my heart—to be easily obliterated. Expert indeed must be the hypocrite who could affect all I have heard him profess. I am no novice in the flatteries and feigning of mankind. The same vows have been sworn to me by other lips—the same devotion affected by other men. My fortune has insured me suitors of various countries.

'd various degrees of hypocrisy;—but none have ever deserved me."

"Surely, however," said Lady Sophia, "it may be possible that your partiality for your cousin——!"

"If there be faith in any human heart, it is in Launceston's!" cried her friend, with the eager confidence of affection.

"She will not listen to reason from the lips of any one but his sister," said Lady Sophia, addressing Frederica. "It is therefore incumbent on you to forewarn this infatuated cousin of yours, should you chance to be better instructed in his views. In one word, my dear Frederica, is Lord Launceston free in heart and hand, to tender himself to Mary's acceptance?"

Lady Rawleigh shook her head.

"My dearest cousin, explain yourself!" said Lady Mary Trevlyan. "Without promising to yield implicit conviction to your inferences, I am anxious to acquaint myself with every fact within your knowledge."

"Do not ask it, do not ask it," faltered Frederica. "Launceston is too dear to me, his honour is too precious in my sight, to be lightly compromised. I cannot bear to believe him so unworthy as I fear he has proved himself."

"But the whole affair must be brought to an immediate explanation," observed Lady Sophia Lee. "Lord Trevlyan is growing impatient. His health suffers by his sojourn in the damp atmosphere of Cornwall; and having been deceived by his sister's sanguine letters into a belief of Lord Launceston's passion for his daughter, he is about to visit London. After forcing his nephew to confess his attachment to the obscure Miss Elbany, it will be no small triumph to tender to his acceptance the object of his rash passion, in the form of Lady Mary Trevlyan, with a fortune of ten thousand a year."

"What—what will my uncle think and say of William, when he learns the truth! My dear Mary! for all our sakes, persuade him at least to defer this fatal explanation!"

"You really alarm me!" cried Lady Mary, turning very pale. "And as you perceive that a crisis is inevitable, surely you will not scruple to apprise me of the truth. Are you certain that Launceston has been, at any time, *really* engaged to Miss Waddestone?"

"Alas! it is but a few hours since I was informed of the fact by her father; and with so much emotion of parental tenderness, that I cannot withhold my belief."

Lady Mary Trevlyan shuddered, but said nothing.

"And this is not the worst. Were it a mere engagement, formed as the world believes from sordid motives on one side, and ambitious views on the other, I could wish—I could hope—that it might be mutually resigned. But I can no longer indulge in expectations

such a nature. Leonora's affections are too deeply pledged for Mr. Waddlestone to behold them betrayed without signal retribution. His heart is as much set as his daughter's on her union with my brother."

"Do you assure me, dear Frederica," said Lady Mary, scarcely able to articulate, "that Leonora is really attached to him?"

Lady Rawleigh was significantly silent.

"Poor girl!" involuntarily ejaculated Lady Sophia. "To *her* delicate feelings, the shock will be indeed severe!"

"Frederica, you have not answered me," said Lady Mary, with solemn earnestness.—"Does Mr. Waddlestone's daughter really love your brother?"

"It was not till that unfortunate *fête* at Calder House," hesitated Lady Rawleigh, "that I had an opportunity of learning from her own lips how deeply her heart is pledged to Launceston. It was my intention to put her on her guard, by some slight hint of his levity and infidelity. But the candour of her allusion to her attachment, completely disarmed me. I had no courage to agonize the feelings of so gentle and confiding a being."

"It is enough!" murmured Lady Mary Trevelyan, rising from her seat. "Suffer me to leave you. I can meet this mortification best alone. Sophy! do not follow me. Your consolations, however kindly meant, are unavailing to soften this last—this wholly unexpected misfortune!"

"Have I done wrong in declaring the truth?" said Lady Rawleigh, timidly, as her cousin closed the door of the apartment.

"Decidedly not," answered her friend, after a moment's consideration. "The worst part of this calamity originated in mutual deception; and depend on it, dissimulation is ever productive of disastrous results. Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is the sole unerring guide."

"Launceston's deceptions could not have been prolonged; or I own I should have hesitated to inflict so much pain upon poor Mary."

"Do not alarm yourself. She has a romantic, but a truly courageous spirit. I know no person more capable of generous sacrifices and honourable disinterestedness than Mary Trevelyan."

"And such is the sister I have lost,—such the companion!" cried Frederica, despondingly. "Leonora is a mild, intelligent, endearing creature; but not to be compared in qualities and endowments with my high-minded cousin."

"It was so ill-done on my part to depend on Rawleigh's judgment in such a case!" cried Lady Sophia, peevishly. "But, in fact, I was guided by your mother's opinion; who has managed

the affair, throughout, with perfect prudence and delicacy. For all the best faculties of a woman's mind and heart, borne with the unassuming meekness of a saint, commend me to Lady Launceston. Were it not for the infirmity of her health, she would be the most charming companion, as she is at present the most excellent woman in England."

"That is Sir Brooke's knock!" cried Frederica, suddenly starting up, and tying on her bonnet.

"I am glad it is so late, for I should have had no patience to sit in his company without reproaching him with the mischief he has occasioned. At all events, do not involve him further in the affair by acquainting him with Mary's wretchedness. I will see you early to-morrow, and inform you of her future views and resolutions."

It is unnecessary to acquaint the reader with what degree of exactness Lady Rawleigh obeyed the injunctions of her friend. Few are the women whose truth to the cause of their own sex induce them to withhold its secrets from the conjugal ear; and if Frederica really abstained from introducing Sir Brooke behind the scenes of Lady Mary's position, and reproaching him with the evils arising from his blindness and credulity, she deserves considerable praise for her forbearance.

But lest she should pass for a miracle of caution, it is fair to state that her mind was considerably engrossed by the altered position of her own affairs,—by rejoicings over her extrication, mingled with penitence for past follies, and good resolutions for the future. Her first care was to indite a formal note to Mrs. William Erskyne, to accompany on the morrow the sum due for the Opera-box; and though her misgivings respecting the tenor of Mr. Obadiah Ruggs's answer to her request no longer disturbed her repose, she was seated at her desk in her dressing-room, the following morning, at nearly the same hour which had closed her night of sorrow, on occasion of Lord Calder's *fête*.

But times were strangely altered.

"Can it be possible," she exclaimed, "that all my vexation and discontent, my peevishness and nervous distemperature, for the last three weeks, has originated in the want and waste of money? Have I, from the wantonness of extravagance, contracted so mean a feeling as mercenary anxiety? Never again will I expose myself to such temptations and such wretchedness; and when perfect confidence in money transactions is established between myself and Rawleigh, and by referring my bills to him for payment, I expose myself to reprobation for every prodigal or frivolous action, I shall be insured from all danger of further extravagance. I lov-

him too well, much too well, to hazard the loss of his good opinion for the indulgence of my idle fancies."

Such was the result of her matin meditations; while the fruits of her early rising were made apparent as she approached the breakfast table with a list of her debts in one hand, and in the other, the cheque forwarded to her acceptance by Lord Trevelyan.

"And when you have perused and reperused this record of my frailties and follies," whispered Frederica, as she hung over her husband's chair, "desire to accept the sum presented to me by my uncle,—give me only the balance necessary for the payment of my debts; and for the future, let the odious word PIN MONEY be forgotten between us."

Sir Brooke smiled, and shook his head. But not reproachfully.

"I know you will be as conscientious and liberal a banker," continued Frederica, while tears of tenderness and repentance streamed from her eyes, "as you are a merciful judge. And for the future; I shall have no scruple in demanding from your kindness the payment of my personal bills, for they shall never be of a nature to excite your disapprobation."

"But as this affair of the Pin Money was legally specified on—"

"No—no—no!" interrupted Lady Rawleigh. "Nothing has been, or ever shall be, legally specified between us. Besides, I have proved myself incapable of the management of my revenue, and am bound to appoint a chancellor of the exchequer. Should I ever become as worldly-wise as my aunt Olivia, I will re-demand my abdicated rights."

"God forbid that you should ever be otherwise than I see you now!" ejaculated Sir Brooke, as he folded her in his arms. "I accept your pledge,—I welcome your promises,—I have perfect faith in the good intentions of my own dear wife. Should she at any future time repent her confidence in my liberality, she has only to address her formal demand to Obadiah Ruggs. In the meantime," said Sir Brooke, putting Lord Trevelyan's cheque into his pocket, with a determination that it should be scrupulously devoted to its original purpose, "in the meantime, let me write you a cheque for the balance of your account. If you love me, send it to Lombard-street immediately after breakfast, and discharge your obligations to that mischievous Mrs. Erskyne without further delay. Henceforth, dearest Frederica, be all past grievances forgotten between us!"

"Between us if you will. But it will be a salutary lesson to me, to cherish, for life, the recollection of all I have suffered through my ignorance and neglect of the value of money."

Before Sir Brooke had reached the final "gh" in the signature of the cheque, Lord Launceston was announced.

"Leave us together," whispered Frederica to her husband, as he entered the room.—"My brother looks as if he had something important to communicate."

CHAPTER XL.

But whatsoe'er he had of Love, reposed
On that beloved daughter!—She had been
The only thing which kept his heart unclosed
Amid the hardening of the worldly scene;
A lonely pure affection unopposed!
There wanted but the loss of this to wean
His feelings from all milk of human kindness.

BYRON.

NOTHING more diverting to an indifferent spectator, than the sight of two persons connected by intimate ties of kindred and affection, casually alienated into a sort of awkward estrangement and formality by the existence of some disagreeable secret. Though a common topic predominates in the minds of both, neither can venture to approach the prohibited subject.

Lord Launceston's embarrassment sought the usual channel for the splenetic effusions of a discontented Englishman. He began to complain of the weather; protested that the fête at Kensington Gore had been spoiled by too much sunshine,—the evening rendered disagreeable by too much dew;—and stood at the window, looking anxiously towards the clouds, on pretence of coming rain, but in reality to evade his sister's inquisition. While Frederica, at once eager to escape his inquiries, and forward her own, affected an unusual degree of interest in the news of the morning; the reports concerning Mrs. Erskyne, and a strange rumour she had heard respecting a marriage between Mr. Vaux and Lady Margaret Fieldham.

To these idle tales Lord Launceston lent a willing but a listless ear. His mind was full,—his heart was full;—and, like all persons of real sensibility who attempt unusual caution and finesse in introducing a disagreeable subject, he brought forth the business at last in the most abrupt and inartificial, manner. Suddenly interrupting himself in a diatribe against Vaux, as the most plausible and worldly-minded of tuft-hunters, he exclaimed, "My dear Frederica, unless you undertake an explanation of this business to Mr. Waddlestone, I know not what will become of us all."

"Impossible!" cried Lady Rawleigh; "for worlds, I would not encounter the expression of that poor girl's wretchedness."

"Of you," continued Lord Launceston, without noticing her reply; "he has the very highest opinion. From your lips he would

listen patiently to an apology which, if delivered by myself or Horace, would certainly produce an insult and a duel in the first instance, besides a decided rupture between the lovers."

"I should have imagined that, with your present views and feelings, you would desire nothing better than such an excuse for getting rid of poor Leonora."

"To be sure not!—Nothing but my old friendship for Rhyse has compelled me to wear the mask so long. But now that old Offaley *has* consented, I think it rather hard,—but it is no use talking to you on the subject. *Your* prejudices, my dear Frederica, must necessarily render any circumstances distasteful which would immediately determine me to claim the hand of poor dear Lucy."

"Have you resolved to drive me to distraction, by all these mysteries?" exclaimed his sister. "What in the world have Lord Offaley and his son to do with your marriage?"

"How!" cried Lord Launceston, coming from his window, and throwing himself on a seat beside her. "Is it possible that you are still deceived? Leonora assured me that, at the Calder House fête, she attempted to explain to you the unlucky deception in which we have foolishly involved ourselves."

"Miss Waddlestone's explanations were as little luminous as your own. If you love me, dear William, admit a little further light into the business."

"I *do* love you, my little Fred! and not the less for the warm interest you bestow on my affairs. In one word, then, or in as few as possible, know that, last summer, I received a letter from Horace Rhyse, imploring me to come down to Cowes without delay, and rescue him from a most painful predicament. I thought the poor fellow was in limbo; and in the simplicity of my heart, gathered together all the pounds, shillings, and pence I could call my own, with a view to relieve the difficulties of my oldest Harrow friend, who, through life, has done me more good turns in a quiet way than I would have accepted from any other man, or can ever pay him back. The prison in which I found him was neither more nor less than Waddlestone's beautiful Marino! He had picked up the family at Rome, and fallen as desperately in love with Leonora as if there were any chance of prevailing on his stiffnecked father to receive into his family a soapboiler's daughter; or of inducing Mrs. Waddlestone to content herself with being mother to an Honourable Mrs. Rhyse."

"My dear Launceston—I see it all now. I sincerely beg your pardon for—"

"No! you don't see it half, and you had better not beg my pardon at present. I deserve all the saucy things you have said

and done in the business, by madly conniving in one of the most absurd schemes ever concocted by two wrong-headed lovers! But Colonel Rhyse was induced to seek my aid, by the unpleasant circumstances arising from Mrs. W.'s suspicions of his attachment to her daughter. After inviting him to her house and throwing them together in the most unjustifiable manner, she suddenly informed him of her determination 'to marry Leo to a lord'; adding certain hints that there were other bathing places, and other Marinos, where he might enjoy the sea air fully as well as on the banks of the Medina."

"And you came to his assistance, and, by lending him the shelter of your coronet, secured the continuance of her favour?"

"Exactly so! She was so charmed with 'my lordship' that she would gladly have extended her hospitality to my lordship's valet and poodle, to say nothing of my lordship's bosom friend. Under my sanction, Rhyse was duly re-admitted to the yacht and the dinner-table; while Leonora's soft blue eyes thanked me for promoting their mutual happiness."

"They were perhaps already engaged?"

"Heart, soul and hand!—And if we had been wise,—if there had existed one tolerable head-piece among the three,—she would have appealed at once to the affection of her parents, and ended the business without further artifice. But Horace had a difficult part to play in his own family. Lord Offaley being as poor as a parish workhouse, thinks it necessary to maintain his dignity by monopolizing all the pride of the peerage; and as he was then in the habit of favouring his son with a letter every post, commanding him to throw himself at the feet of Lady Margaret Fieldham, it seemed useless to answer them by a statement of his attachment to the daughter of a soapboiler. And so, like all dunces, we decided among us that it would be better to gain time, procrastinate the explanation, and pacify Mrs. Waddlestone, by my pretended courtship of Leonora."

"Oh! Launceston!—How could you lend yourself to such a deception?"

"Ay! indeed—how could I! It was a shameful piece of duplicity; shameful because I profited largely by the imposition; being cordially received into one of the pleasantest and most hospitable houses in England, while deceiving the best of fathers!"

"Poor Mr. Waddlestone!"

"Don't talk of him, Frederica, don't talk of him. I dare not look forward to meeting him again! I really love that man. I consider him one of the most high-minded and honourable fellows upon earth; and flatter myself that he regards me with a personal

predilection.—The certainty of forfeiting his good opinion is most painful to my feelings."

"But the explanation is inevitable," said Frederica, musingly.

"As to his daughter," continued Lord Launceston, pursuing his train of thought, "had she been Lady Leonora or Queen Leonora, she never would have been more to me than a pretty gentle little girl. I have no taste for such diminutive goddesses. I require, even in a woman, even in my wife, more decision of character and nobility of aspect."

"Such as you found in Lucy Elbany?" observed Frederica, slyly.

"But with respect to Waddlestone, were he that same Lucy Elbany's poor curate of an uncle, I should still regard him with the same respectful admiration. He is a gentleman, in every sense of the word."

"I doubt whether he will be inclined to return that compliment either to Colonel Rhyse or yourself. But I must make the best of you both," said Lady Rawleigh, rising to ring for the carriage.

"Frederica,—my dearest sister! do you really mean that you will undertake this unpleasant office?"

"I do indeed,—provided that—"

"No provisos which bear any allusion to Lucy."

"At least, allow me to—"

"I will allow you to do nothing but put on your bonnet. I will order the carriage while you are away."

Just as Lord Launceston was conducting his sister down stairs, Lady Olivia's voice was heard in the hall.

"Oh! that woman!" groaned his lordship.

"My dear Fred.,—my dear nephew!" cried her ladyship, seizing upon them.

"Do not let her detain us," whispered Lord Launceston to his sister. "Do not, in retribution of my sins, suffer that foolish old woman's twaddle to prolong my misery."

It was however the thought of her cousin Mary's sufferings, rather than his own, which induced Frederica to turn a deaf ear to Lady Olivia's volubility. "Excuse me, excuse me, my dear aunt," she cried, rushing through the hall to her carriage. "I have not a moment to spare."

"But I *must* speak with you, if only for half a second. I have something of great importance to communicate."

"In the afternoon,—in the evening. But as you may perceive, the carriage is at the door—"

"But I will step into it, and accompany you."

"Impossible!—Launceston is going with me, and we are to call for a friend."

"A friend?" exclaimed Lady Olivia, contemptuously—"When the best interests of your family are at stake!"

"I grieve to be so ungracious," persisted her niece. "But I really *must* leave you. I have important business in hand."

"Business!" again retorted the aunt, doubly agonized at the idea of being excluded from such an enjoyment. "You talk of business, Frederica,—*you* attempt to transact business, without my advice and assistance!—*You* who actually omitted to endorse a bank-bill!"

"My dear sister," interposed Lord Launceston, "reflect what precious moments you are wasting. Let me implore you to—"

"As you please!" cried Lady Olivia, growing furious, and seating herself on a hall-chair, to recover her breath. "Perhaps, Lord Launceston, you may feel better inclined to honour me with your attention, when you learn that my brother Trevelyan is arrived in town; and that you will have to account to him for your past and present conduct."

"For anything that I care, Lord Trevelyan may—"

"Come away!" interrupted Frederica, her anxiety for a termination of the Waddlestone business redoubled by this intelligence; and still more, by the dread of Lady Mary's immediate departure. Seizing her brother by the arm, she jumped into the carriage, leaving Lady Olivia transfixed in the hall-chair.

"Vastly well, it is all vastly well!" she panted, as the chariot rolled from the door. "I shall hear that gracious young gentleman change his note before the day is over. He will find that Lord Trevelyan, of Trevelyan castle, is not a person to be insulted with impunity. What was that, Martin, my nephew said about Lord Trevelyan, just before he left the hall?—'that for anything he cared'—*what was it?*'"

"I really cannot take upon myself to say, my lady," replied the butler, anxious to close the hall-door on her departure. "But I think her ladyship observed that she should be at your house in less than an hour, my lady."

"Did she?—Are you sure she said less than an hour?" cried Lady Olivia, astonished that anything should have escaped her ears, which, like those of Fine-Ear in the fairy tale, were apt to hear the grass grow. "Then I must be off without delay, for I have got to call in Charles-street, on my way home, and at the van office, about booking the Miss Peewit's trunks; and at the furrier's, who takes care of my sable muff and tippet for the summer; besides leaving my card on Mrs. Camomile, to thank the Doctor for the use of his carriage. In *less* than an hour! It is now half-past two. I shall never be back in time."

Joyfully did Martin hail her departure; while Sir Brooke, aft-

cautiously extruding his head from the study-door, to ascertain that she was really gone, stole off in an opposite direction, to bear to Lady Sophia Lee Frederica's pacifying message and entreaties that she would not suffer Lady Mary Trevelyan to quit her protection without a further interview.

In the course of the foregoing narrative, we have permitted ourselves to gratify the curiosity of the inquisitive reader and our own taste for the diffuse, by such a superabundance of circumstantial detail, that the admirable diplomacy exhibited by Lady Rawleigh at Waddlestone House, must be passed over in a cursory manner. Women have a peculiar tact for this sort of domestic negotiation. They seize the efficient line of attack, with the discrimination of a leading counsel, and detect at once the weak points of the enemy.

But it needed all the persuasive gentleness of Frederica's voice, all the eloquence of her phraseology, and all the amiable emotion of sisterly partiality trembling on her lips, to moderate the indignation of Mr. Waddlestone at the imposition practised upon him by Lord Launceston and his friend. There was one point, however, on which Lady Rawleigh rejoiced that her eloquence was not in demand. She felt that she should have been puzzled to find arguments in favour of Leonora. What could be urged in exculpation of a child, who, knowing herself to be so tenderly, so exclusively beloved, had enlisted in an ungrateful stratagem to deceive an adoring parent?

"To Lord Launceston and Colonel Rhyse," faltered Mr. W., with deep emotion, "I readily concede my pardon; they are aliens to me and mine, and have broken a bond of no peculiar sanctity. They have eaten of my bread and drunk of my cup, it is true; but they have not been unto me as a daughter. Oh! Lady Rawleigh! May you never know the anguish of treachery from such a source; may you never learn what it is to find your own heart's blood arrayed in rebellion against you, to feel yourself deceived by one whom, from infancy to maturity, you have strained in boundless confidence to your bosom! But I am justly punished for my infatuation. I suffered my child to wander through the corrupt and contaminating mazes of the world of fashion; and sowed the wind, to reap the whirlwind!"

Frederica, satisfied of her own incompetency to make the worse appear the better cause, in order to appease the wrath of a justly-incensed parent, did not forget the existence of a far more eloquent advocate. She determined to leave the business in the hands of NATURE; and, having summoned the terrified Leonora, had the satisfaction of perceiving that a few bitter tears of contrition

shed upon the bosom of her father, said more in her favour than all the rounded periods which could have been pressed into her service from the eloquence of Lyndhurst or Brougham. Mr. Wad-dlestone promised to try to forgive, when it was evident that his pardon was already accorded. After all, Colonel Rhyse was a young man of prepossessing manners, and good reputation. It might have been worse!

With Mrs. W., meanwhile, Frederica found her task infinitely less distressing. There was a ludicrous, Mrs. Peachumlike tone of distress in her lamentations over the degeneracy of her daughter, in preferring a paltry Honourable to a real bona-fide Lord, that blunted all delicacy in seeking her concurrence in the match. And having at length persuaded the irate lady to join with her husband in bestowing her blessing and forgiveness on the trembling Titania, Lady Rawleigh privately insinuated her opinion that Lord Offaley's interest and her own millions might possibly procure the honours of a peerage for his second son. Moreover, the elder brother being still a bachelor, and a notorious Meltonian, there remained a tolerably clear vista towards the Earldom.

Before Frederica quitted the house, peace was in some measure restored; and on the whole, the affair was one of less perplexity than she originally anticipated. Mrs. W.'s hysterics had been by no means so vehement as might have been expected; and though the mortified father still wore expressed upon his brow the disappointment of a man who finds himself wronged, even "there where he had gathered up his heart," he had the mercy to smile upon the penitent Leonora; and the forbearance to claim from Lady Rawleigh the continuance of her friendship for his child.

"This is indeed kind of you!" said Frederica, in reply, as he led her to her carriage. "Conscious of the unworthy treatment you have received from us, I was apprehensive that both my brother and myself would be henceforward excluded from your good opinion."

"Lord Launceston," said Mr. W., "has conducted himself like a young and thoughtless man. At his age, perhaps the persuasions of a bosom friend might have urged me into the same error. I am, however, more grieved for the loss of such a son as I anticipated in your brother, than angry at the success of his plot."

"Tell me then that I may send him to obtain your pardon," said Lady Rawleigh, in a low voice, bending from the window of the carriage. "The two offenders, I fancy, are not far distant."

"Not to-day,—I am not equal to seeing them to-day!" said the agitated father, with a pale mournful smile.

"Yes,—let the worst be over at once," rejoiced Lady R.—A

despatching her servant towards the entrance of the court-yard to summon Lord Launceston and Colonel Rhyse, who were waiting in their cabriolet at the gate, she had the satisfaction of seeing the three gentlemen shake hands and enter the house together, before she drove back to town.

C O N C L U S I O N .

ON their way to Kensington Gore, Frederica had obtained a promise from her brother that he would meet her at dinner in Charles-street, and take no steps, in the interim, relative to his uncle's arrival, or Lucy's enigmatical disappearance. She even pacified him by a promise to obtain from her mother such intelligence concerning her protégée as might satisfy his doubts on the subject. "But I fairly warn you, dear William," said Lady Rawleigh, "that to my certain knowledge, you have not the least chance of seeing Miss Elbany again!"

None but a lover could have been sufficiently blind to interpret the arch smile with which this declaration was uttered, into the expression of malicious triumph. Nevertheless it weighed so heavily on the heart of Lord Launceston, that he presented himself at his mother's door between seven and eight o'clock, with a brow as moody as if he had not passed an hour at Waddlestone House in perfect charity with its inmates, and in all the joy of beholding his friend Horatio accepted as the future husband of Leonora.

On the stairs, he was accosted by his sister, who begged him to retire with her for a moment to the back drawing-room, as she had something interesting to communicate; and irritated by the brilliancy of her dress, and evident elation of her spirits, so little in accordance with his own feelings, he followed her into a room where, seated in solemn state on the sofa, he was welcomed by a grave elderly personage, whose family resemblance announced the dreaded Earl of Trevelyan!

Indignant at being the dupe of an ambuscade, Launceston immediately assumed an air of defiance, and a tone of self-possession very little in unison with his real feelings. He listened indeed to his uncle's remonstrances, in respectful silence; and hazarded not a word in apology for his own inexplicit conduct towards his cousin. But when, at the close of his oration, Lord Trevelyan proceeded to state that, notwithstanding the levity and inconsideration of his conduct, both Lady Mary and himself were willing to fulfil the contract, Lord Launceston no longer scrupled to reply. In firm, but uncourteous terms, he declined the proffered honour; and by way

of a decisive close to the negotiation, frankly acknowledged that he was pledged in heart and hand to another.

"I shall not, however, consider the rejection conclusive," said his delighted uncle, "till you have had an opportunity to admire in your cousin those personal graces which have obtained the applause of half the courts in Europe; and my solicitor will wait upon you to-morrow with the project of a settlement which would put you in possession, on your marriage, of a sum of eighty thousand pounds in ready money, as well as of estates to the amount of ten thousand per annum."

Indignant at this hint of bribery and corruption, the young lord of Marston Park and its mortgages assumed an heroic air. "Were Lady Mary Trevelyan the most faultless, as well as the most lovely of women," said he, "she would never rival in my estimation the humble and obscure individual to whose happiness I have sworn to devote the homage of my future life. With respect to your lordship's munificence, I trust I may be spared all future allusion to so humiliating a subject."

He rose to leave the apartment, and Frederica seized the opportunity to throw open the doors of the drawing-room; where he now beheld, to his utter dismay, an assemblage of his nearest friends and relatives, attired in all the brilliancy of full dress;—his mother and Lady Olivia, Sir Brooke Rawleigh, the General, and Lady Sophia Lee.

"Now for Lady Mary!" thought poor Launceston. And the prospect of being obliged to assume a cold and discourteous demeanour towards a woman, imparted the most awkward embarrassment to his air. But it was not his dreaded cousin, who, on his entrance, rose from Lady Launceston's side, and advanced towards him. It was Lucy herself—his own poor humble Lucy; nor could he by any means understand the folly which had enfolded her majestic figure in robings of the richest satin, and encircled her beautiful head and graceful arms with a profusion of diamonds. In spite of this superfluous magnificence, however, and of the audience by which she was surrounded, her manner had lost nothing of its usual frankness.

"My dear William," she exclaimed, accepting his extended hands, "my dear cousin,—I read in my father's countenance that all is right. You are not to be dissuaded from your engagements to poor Lucy."

"Well, young sir! Do you still persist in rejecting my daughter?" said Lord Trevelyan, his eyes glistening with the emotion of gratified paternal love, while Frederica, her husband, and friend gathered round the group.

Lord Launceston's reply to this inquiry need not be repeated. Suffice it that it gave rise to a general family congratulation.

"Dearest mother," cried he, leading his plighted bride towards Lady Launceston, to meet her maternal embrace, "I did not think you could be such a traitress."

"Believe me," she replied, affectionately folding her niece in her arms, "we quiet people are the only depositaries for a secret. You have sometimes thought me insensible to your vexations. But with such children as mine, I knew that our difficulties must eventually terminate in honour and happiness!"

It was a delightful dinner—a charming evening;—one of those glorious summer holidays, which sanctioned even Lady Launceston in enjoying the luxury of open windows and a verandah filled with flowers. During Frederica's journey to Kensington Gore that morning, parliament had been prorogued; and as Sir Brooke was once more a free man, it was settled that the whole party should immediately adjourn to Ash Bank, for the solemnization of the marriage by which it was to be still more closely united. Lady Olivia's delight at this promised accession of seven visitors to her beautiful villa, almost silenced her accustomed garrulity!

"My dear Frederica!" whispered Lady Sophia Rhyse, drawing her friend away from the group. "While your brother and Mary are murmuring soft nothings to each other, at yonder window, Lady Launceston and Lord Trevelyan are deep in finance. I heard them plotting together, just now, concerning the marriage settlements. Go! dearest,—Go and interpose a word of advice on the important article of PIN MONEY!—"

FINIS.

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